

The Current NSW Ratios / Nursing Hours System

In our 2010/2011 Public Health System campaign NSW nurses and midwives won a ground-breaking, mandated minimum staffing system that delivered the first stage of a system to improve patient safety and clinical outcomes. These improvements have been introduced over the last two years and will be fully implemented by 30 June 2013.

Around 95 of the 217 hospitals across the state will have employed at least 1,580 more Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) nurses and midwives by 30 June 2013. More than 530 wards and units are now part of the new system. This is a direct result of the campaign, because the Government was legally bound to employ nurses and midwives to comply with the improved Award standards for patient care.

Below are some details of where the improvements have been made.

Inpatient Wards/units

The mandated staffing system of nursing hours/ratios applies to the following areas:

- General inpatient wards;
- Dedicated palliative care units;
- Dedicated rehabilitation units; and
- Inpatient mental health adult acute wards.

The total number of 'converted' inpatient wards in these specialties is 391. This has required 1,151 FTE nurses to be employed by 30 June 2013.

The 391 wards include:

- 350 surgical, medical, dedicated palliative care and rehabilitation wards converted to the new system by 30 June 2013, with an additional 980 FTE nurses employed.
- 41 inpatient mental health wards converted by 30 June 2013, with an additional 171 FTE employed.

FACT SHEET

Emergency Department - additional resuscitation nurses

An additional 150 FTE resuscitation nurses will have been employed in 32 different hospitals by 30 June 2013 - all as a result of the 2010/2011 win.

Operating Theatres

With the introduction of ACORN 2008 staffing standards an additional 140 FTE nurses across 66 hospitals will be employed by 30 June 2013. The 2008 standards remain current as at February 2013.

Birthing Services

Birthrate Plus (as modified for the NSW Health System) has been implemented and now applies in 41 different hospitals. As a consequence around 145 FTE additional midwives have been employed.

Peer Group D and F3 MPS

As a result of the 2010/2011 win facilities with community inpatient acute beds and a level 2 or above Emergency Department are required to have a minimum of two *registered* nurses on duty (whilst the ED is open).

It was agreed that the implementation of this provision would be achieved progressively. NSWNMA research shows that this provision is starting to take effect and is improving skill mix in these facilities.

Additional Provisions

There is now a mandated process in the Award which must be followed when replacing unplanned absences such as sick leave. This replacement of absences is colloquially known as 'like for like' and is intended to protect skill mix on every shift.

Building on the new system

The improvements in staffing won in 2011 by NSW nurses and midwives will be fully implemented by 30 June 2013.

Whilst there have been teething problems where management have tried to cut budgets and avoid their legal responsibilities, it is clear that members working in properly implemented wards strongly support the new system.

Now it is time to extend and improve the system.