

What the Government is saying and what the facts are

What the Government is saying about our ratios campaign

“Ratios” do not apply in the NSW Health system. Instead there is an agreed formula based on ‘nursing-hours-per-patient day’.

The nurse staffing formula is the same for all regional and metro hospitals.

The previous government did not agree to nurse to patient ratios in community nursing, emergency departments OR a further increase in Clinical Nurse Educators.

The government has recruited 4,000 nurses by headcount (more than 2,745 FTE) against our commitment of 2,475 more nurses.

‘We are still in discussions.’

‘The Association’s leadership is being unreasonable and misleading members and want a ‘one size fits all solution’.

What are the facts

This is untrue. We have never disputed the existence of NHPPD and we do not seek a new system. In our award which is a legal document, ‘nursing hours’ is also expressed as equivalent ratios. Ratios is the language used and understood by nurses everywhere.

This is untrue. The variables used in the formula between metropolitan, country hospitals and specialties are different. Country hospitals simply do not have the same nurse to patient ratios as hospitals in the city even in similar circumstances. This is unsafe.

The Association negotiated the first phase of the award in 2011 to implement ratios with the previous government to improve patient care. Now it’s this government’s turn – they must improve ratios in country hospitals and extend them to areas that don’t currently have them, including specialties like community nursing, emergency departments and paediatrics.

This doesn’t add up. Our last ratios campaign delivered 1580 more FTEs to the system. If we look at the continuing shortages in areas where there aren’t nurse-to-patient ratios as well as the obvious need for more staff in country areas, figures the government is asserting seem dubious. Even the Ministry of Health can’t explain where all these extra nurses are working. More MUST still be done in country hospitals and key specialty areas for patient safety.

This is simply untrue. This statement is being used to imply that there may be pending positive outcomes from current talks between the NSWNMA and the Ministry of Health. We have been explicitly told that there is no merit in our members’ claim. In short, Government is saying ‘no’ to improvements in nursing ratios for country hospitals and understaffed specialties. Even if the Government saw merit, we would have to trade away conditions for more nurses.

This is untrue. Independent research shows that an overwhelming majority of nurses and midwives in NSW believe that ratios in the Public Health system are necessary for safe patient care and our number one priority.

Our claim is based on extensive international academic research and confirmed by nurses and midwives who work across the health system about ideal patient outcomes and nursing care. Marked improvements to patient care are consistently shown where adequate nurse/patient ratios are in place.

Our claim is carefully tailored for the nursing care needs of each type of patient.