

Hospital and Health Boards (Safe Nurse-to-Patient and Midwife-to-Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2015 (QLD)

Please be advised that the *Hospital and Health Boards (Safe Nurse-to-Patient and Midwife-to-Patient Ratios) Amendment Bill 2015* (Qld) (**the Amending Bill**) passed the third reading stage in the Legislative Assembly on 12 May 2016 and is currently awaiting Royal Assent. The Amending Bill amends the *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011* (Qld) (the Act) and is due to commence on 1 July 2016.

The main objective of the Amending Bill is to provide for safer patient care in hospitals by guaranteeing minimum nurse-to-patient ratios and midwife-to-patient ratios for public sector health services (**Services**). Along with the improved patient safety and quality of care, minimum ratios also ensure safer workloads for the nursing and midwifery staff, providing greater workforce sustainability and staff satisfaction.

Previously, Services utilised the *Queensland Health Business Planning Framework: Nursing Resources* (BPF) (which is industrially-mandated under the *Nurses and Midwives (Queensland Health) Certified Agreement (EB8) 2012*) to determine appropriate nursing and midwifery staff levels to safely meet service requirements. The Amending Bill establishes the legislative framework to mandate minimum nurse-to-patient and midwife-to-patient ratios in Queensland.

The Amending Bill inserts a new division into Part 6 of the Act, headed *Minimum nurse-to-patient ratios, midwife-to-patient ratios and workload standards*. Specifically, section 138B provides for the enactment of mandated ratios in nursing and midwifery regulations (the **Regulations**) to allow for flexibility and specificity. The Regulations will prescribe the actual ratios.

The following ratios have been endorsed by Government:

- One nurse or midwife to four patients (1:4) for morning and afternoon shifts; and
- One nurse or midwife to seven patients (1:7) for night shifts.

It is intended that, once enacted in the Regulations, these ratios will apply to acute wards, units or departments within public sector health service facilities as prescribed by the Regulations. This will allow the Government to gradually implement these ratios from 1 July onwards.

As a means of ensuring safe staffing levels, the Amending Bill also requires the Services to comply with workload provisions. Section 138E enables the chief executive of the department to make a standard about nursing and midwifery workload management, including how a Service:

- calculates its nursing or midwifery human resource requirements; or
- develops and implements strategies to manage nursing or midwifery resource supply and demand; or
- evaluates the performance of its nursing or midwifery staff.

These standards are binding on a Service in respect of those wards to which the ratios apply.

Please [click here](#) to access the Amending Bill.

Contact

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