Supporting Patients: Nurse Navigators & Midwives
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Message from the Premier

My government has worked hard rebuilding our health system from the damage caused by the former Newman-Nicholls Government.

While the Newman-Nicholls Government policies were to cut staff, sell assets and outsource services, my government has employed more than 7000 additional frontline health staff, including 4160 additional nurses, more than 1600 additional doctors and an additional 1200 allied health professionals since we came to office.

Our commitment to frontline services in health demonstrates my government’s values and priorities.

In this year’s budget our allocation for the health portfolio is a record $16.55 billion, a substantial 21.5 per cent increase on the final budget delivered by Tim Nicholls when he was Campbell Newman’s Treasurer.

Our hospital infrastructure plan is back on track with major refurbishments planned, underway or completed for hospitals across the state.

We have delivered on our commitment to legislate for safe nurse-to-patient ratios, only the fourth jurisdiction in the world to do so, and have given a start to 3550 nurse graduates under our Nursing Guarantee Policy.

We are improving the lives of patients across the state by continuing to roll out Nurse Navigator positions from 240 in our first term to 400 if re-elected. These 400 Nurse Navigators will be embedded in the system with permanent, ongoing funding. In conjunction with our $361.2 million Specialist Outpatient Strategy, my government is working to eliminate waiting lists beyond those clinically recommended for all medical specialities in our hospital and health services.

We’ve come a long way since the cut, sack, sell days of the Newman-Nicholls government. We’ve restored frontline staff and invested in our infrastructure but we know we can continue to improve our health system for the benefit of all Queenslanders.
A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will:

- Employ an additional 3500 nurses and midwives to meet growing demand over four years
- Extend our Nurse Navigator Program to permanently deliver 400 positions in our Hospital and Health Services
- Employ an additional 100 midwives to improve maternity services and ensure all public maternity units meet recognised midwife-to-patient benchmarks
- Expand safe nurse-to-patient ratios to acute public mental health wards

- Introduce safe staff-to-patient ratios, including nurse-to-patient ratios, in public aged care settings
- Lobby the Commonwealth Government to introduce safe staff-to-patient ratios, including nurse-to-patient ratios, in private aged care facilities
- Harness the expertise of our nurses to lead programs to improve the coordination and integration of patient care between our hospitals and the primary care and aged care sectors.

Our Commitment
The Newman-Nicholls Legacy

In 2015, our health system was stretched, morale was low and frontline health staff had been sacked. The Newman-Nicholls Government reduced services in hospitals and in the community. Their privatisation agenda hurt our health system.

The Newman-Nicholls Government told health workers they had nothing to fear and their jobs were safe.

This was clearly untrue. As Treasurer, Tim Nicholls was the driving force behind their cut, sack and sell agenda.

4400 health jobs were slashed, including nearly 1400 nursing, 700 allied health positions and 50 doctors, not to mention thousands of temporary workers who were shown the door.

Having taken an axe to the hospital system, Tim Nicholls then went after the community health sector. Community health organisations were defunded, resulting in even more job losses and tragically, a loss of these much needed services across the state.

The Newman-Nicholls Government prioritised the bottom line over patient care, continually increasing the workload of nurses at significant human cost to employees, patients and their families.

The first Nicholls’ budget in 2012 cut $8 million a year from health prevention programs and cut $45 million in funding for mental health, the only government in Queensland history to do so.

Short-term, short-sighted cost-cutting measures and reducing staff just does not work.

The disastrous closure of the Barrett Centre, without replacement, resulted in the tragic deaths of young people with severe mental illness. For some families, the impact of this decision will never go away. We can never allow this to happen again.

... job losses were part and parcel of the former LNP government’s attitude towards the public service, which saw more than 14,000 Queenslanders lose their jobs.
When elected in 2015, the Palaszczuk Government promised a better way and immediately restored frontline services in health.

That is why the Palaszczuk Government has provided more nurses and midwives for our hospitals, and improved their workplaces, scope of practice and career development opportunities.

Our budgets are responsible and our 2017-18 allocation for the health portfolio is a record $16.55 billion, with our hospital infrastructure plan back on track.

We have employed more than 7000 additional frontline health staff, including 4200 additional nurses, more than 1600 additional doctors and an additional 1200 allied health professionals since we came to office.

The Palaszczuk Government has also committed $110.7 million to fund up to 4000 new graduate nurse places, with offers made to newly-qualified registered nurses and midwives in the public health sector over the next four years.

As at July 2017, the cumulative number of graduates who have commenced since the program started is approximately 3550.
The Palaszczuk Government is investing in 240 experienced clinical nurses as Nurse Navigators, with a further 160 to be employed under this program.

By legislating for safe nurse-to-patient ratios, we have ensured that on morning and afternoon shifts in the acute wards of our public hospitals, there will be no more than four patients for each nurse to care for and no more than seven patients for each nurse overnight.

These ratios are based on international research that demonstrates better patient outcomes and better quality of care where such ratios are implemented. This same body of evidence has also found these changes to the working conditions of nurses serve to reduce work-related injuries, reduce absenteeism and increase job satisfaction.

Implementation of nurse-to-patient ratios commenced on 1 July 2016 across 12 hospitals and health services, covering adult acute medical and acute surgical wards in 27 hospitals. Ratios are also being applied to adult acute mental health wards in two hospitals.

The impact of legislated ratios on nursing, patient and organisational outcomes will be assessed through independent research and evaluation by the world leader in nurse-to-patient ratios research, the University of Pennsylvania, working in collaboration with the Queensland University of Technology.

$16.55b HEALTH FUNDING

7,000 NEW FRONTLINE HEALTH STAFF

$110.7m FOR 4000 GRADUATE NURSES
Our health system has come a long way since the election of the Palaszczuk Government in 2015. Together we can continue to provide Queensland with the best possible health system - a system of safe, quality care where all health professionals are proud to work.

We have been restoring services, employing frontline health workers and repairing the damage done by the cut, sack and sell agenda of the Newman-Nicholls Government.

A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will build on the achievements of our first term to ensure Queenslanders have access to more nurses, better hospitals and health care facilities and the best health care system.

Key initiatives of a re-elected Palaszczuk Government will include providing additional midwives and expanding our Nurse Navigator Program.
Growing the Nursing Workforce

As the Queensland population grows and the demand for health and hospital services increase, a re-elected Palaszczuk Government will employ more frontline staff.

Over the four years to June 2020, the Palaszczuk Government will increase our nursing and midwifery workforce by 3,500 nurses and midwives to ensure safe quality health care is provided when and where it is needed.

The allocation of these positions to our 16 Hospital and Health Services is subject to expected activity in each of the next four years and Federal government funding.

Nurse Navigators

A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will continue to deliver on its commitment to employ 400 Nurse Navigators for the important work of ensuring patients with chronic illnesses find the care most appropriate to their needs at an estimated cost of $72 million each year.

Nurse Navigators are a team of registered nurses who provide a service for patients who have complex health conditions and require a high degree of comprehensive, clinical care.

These nurses are highly-experienced and have an in-depth understanding of the health system.

They work across system boundaries in close partnership with multiple health specialists and health service stakeholders, to ensure patients receive the appropriate and timely care needed.

Nurse Navigators have a vital role to play in coordinating clinical services and reducing preventable admissions to hospitals.

My government has already invested to employ 240 experienced clinical nurses as Nurse Navigators, with a further 160 to be recruited over the next two years.

A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will entrench these positions as permanent, ongoing components of the Nurse Navigator Program to ensure the 400 positions in our Hospital and Health Services remain for the future.

100 Midwives

We will invest up to $57 million over four years to employ 100 new midwives across the state to strengthen our maternity services and support Queensland families.

These midwives will be deployed to identify areas of high demand, including regional Queensland, the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast.

Our employment of 100 midwives will ensure
that Queensland maternity units can meet safe midwife-to-patient ratios.

**Safe Nurse-to-Patient Ratios**

There is clear evidence to indicate that the number of nurses on a shift plays an important role in patient safety and quality of care.

The Palaszczuk Government government has legislated minimum nurse-to-patient ratios in the state’s public sector health facilities to ensure resourcing is matched to patient needs to ensure safe patient outcomes.

A nurse-to-patient ratio is the number of nurses or midwives working on a particular ward, unit or department, in relation to the number of patients they care for. The legislated ratios set the minimum number of nursing staff that a Hospital and Health Service must provide on a prescribed ward during a morning, afternoon or night shift.

By legislating for safe nurse-to-patient ratios we have ensured that on morning and afternoon shifts in the acute wards of our public hospitals, there will be no more than
four patients for each nurse to care for and no more than seven patients for each nurse overnight.

Implementing and reporting on these ratios is a key component of our commitment to patient safety and quality care.

We will continue to maintain and report on safe nurse-to-patient ratios in a range of acute care settings.

As part of the second stage of nurse-to-patient-ratio implementation, we will extend nurse-to-patient ratios to all public acute mental health wards in Queensland.

A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will also:

- introduce mandated staff-to-patient ratios, which will include nurse-patient ratios, in publicly-managed aged care facilities.
- lobby the Commonwealth Government, which has responsibility for funding and regulating aged care facilities, to introduce safe staff-to-patient ratios, including nurse-to-patient ratios, in private care facilities.
- commit to maintaining our Nurse Graduate Placement Program to ensure the nursing workforce is refreshed and grows every year.

There are now more employment opportunities available for graduate nurses and midwives with Queensland Health providing offers of up to 4000 places to suitably qualified nursing and midwifery graduates, until 2019.

These additional roles will increase capacity within the health system and contribute to the development of a sustainable Queensland nursing and midwifery workforce.

Graduate opportunities extend to a wide range of clinical areas and geographical locations, including rural and remote health services. Some programs are ward-based, while others are rotations, which may be through a number of wards in a single facility or in rural Hospital and Health Services that may cover a range of facilities.

Nurse-Led Integrated Care

A re-elected Palaszczuk Government will continue to support and invest in innovative programs to improve patient outcomes and better coordinate care between our hospitals and the primary care and aged care sectors.

Nurse-led clinics are expanding because they are an innovative use of the nursing and allied health workforce that can facilitate timely access to specialist services.

An excellent example of such innovation is the GEDI (Geriatric Emergency Department Innovation) and HIPS (Health Intervention Projects for Seniors) programs in the Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service. These two programs ensure coordination between the local emergency department, residential aged care and primary health collaboration. The GEDI program received a Premier’s Award for Excellence in 2016.