

Media Release

Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier



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BACKING OUR NURSES AND MIDWIVES WITH EVEN BETTER RATIOS

The Allan Labor Government is introducing stronger and safer nurse and midwife to patient ratios, ensuring the very best care for Victorian patients and their families.

Premier Jacinta Allan and Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today met with nurses and midwives to announce amendments to the *Safe Patient Care (Nurse to Patient and Midwife to Patient Ratios) Act* will be introduced today, to put more nurses and midwives on shift – at all hours of the day.

The legislation will see more nurses in the state's busiest metropolitan and regional intensive care units (ICUs), emergency departments (EDs), high dependency and coronary care units, and more midwives in maternity wards.

The new ratios are the result of extensive consultation with nurses and midwives, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) and health services, and will set in stone:

- the 'gold standard' 1:1 nurse to occupied bed ratio in ICUs on all shifts for all Level 1 and 2 hospitals – meaning that every occupied ICU bed has a dedicated nurse assigned to it at all times. ICUs will also require a team leader and liaison nurse for the very first time
- improved staffing ratios in resuscitation cubicles in EDs on morning shifts – bringing morning shifts in line with afternoon and night shifts
- 1:4 midwife to patient ratios in postnatal and antenatal wards on night shifts – down from 1:6
- an in-charge nurse on night shifts in standalone High Dependency Units and Coronary Care Units

These changes will improve care across our state's health services, with ICUs benefitting from additional specialist nurses who can expertly manage critically ill patients with multiple and complex needs.

Patients in EDs will also benefit from a dedicated nurse in each resuscitation bay on every shift – recognising that EDs always have critically unwell patients that need care.

These changes will also increase the number of midwives working night shift – delivering the best and highest level of care to families around the clock.

An in-charge nurse on night duty in high dependency and coronary care units will also ensure oversight of these critical areas on all shifts.

Nurse to patient and midwife to patient ratios were first introduced in 2000 – but the former Liberal Government tried to force nurses to trade them away as part of their Enterprise Agreement negotiations.

It's why in 2015, and under a Labor Government, Victoria became the first state in Australia to enshrine nurse- and midwife-to-patient ratios in law.

The new ratios build on the Labor Government's 28.4 per cent pay increase for our hardworking nurses and midwives – helping to retain and recruit more nurses so more Victorians can get the very best care.

These improved ratios have been backed by a \$101.3 million investment to support health services with hiring or rostering additional nurses and midwives.

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Quote attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

“Anyone who’s experienced the incredible care of our nurses and midwives knows just how special their work really is. These reforms will mean an extra pair of hands, and an extra set of eyes, for some of our most precious patients.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

“We’re strengthening ratios – because it means better care for Victorians and more support for our hard-working nurses and midwives.”