Queensland’s nurses and midwives have come a long way in a few years...

But there’s a lot more to do.

This election...

VOTE FOR MORE NURSES & MIDWIVES.
A very different state of play

It doesn’t seem long ago that the Newman/Nicholls government swept into power with the largest majority in Queensland’s political history. Despite promising no cuts to frontline jobs, 1800 full time equivalent (FTE) nurses and midwives were sacked, along with 14,000 public sector workers.

Other vital health services were also cut, including Eventide Aged Care, the Bila Sexual Health Clinic, the Barrett Adolescent Centre, Wynnum Hospital, and the primary school nurse program.

Nurses and midwives, along with the community, fought these cuts long and hard. And despite the LNP government’s shock defeat in 2015, a lot of damage had already been done.

2015 – 2017:

Our work to restore frontline services

Since then we’ve come a long way. For the past few years, nurses and midwives have been at the front of the government’s agenda... because any good government knows that investing in nurses and midwives is an investment in the health of all Queenslanders.

What have we achieved?

Minimum nurse-to-patient ratios:

Queensland is now the fourth jurisdiction in the world to have legislated minimum nurse-to-patient ratios in public hospitals. With the support of the Labor party and all crossbench MPs, legislated ratios now apply across 80% of acute medical and surgical wards in 27 public hospitals, and in mental health wards in two hospitals. This historic legislation is a real win for patient safety.

But this was just the first phase of the QNMU’s Ratios Save Lives campaign launched in 2015. Rolling out our full Ratios plan is a marathon, not a sprint.

While we continue our work bedding down ratios in areas where they currently apply, the focus now is on securing minimum ratios across the rest of the public sector, as well as the private and aged care sectors.

4000 nursing/midwifery graduates:

With 1800 FTE experienced nurses and midwives cut by the Newman/Nicholls government, there was little hope for new nursing/midwifery graduates seeking employment.

The Palaszczuk government committed to employ 4000 new graduates over four years, costing $110.6 million. As a result 3550 graduates are now employed under the program, strengthening our nursing and midwifery workforce.

Knowing there were an extra 4000 new graduate jobs being created offered some piece of mind and a bit of security for people like me graduating at that time.

Graduate Nurse

2012 – 2015:

We know more about the patients... you feel like you’re actually nursing, actually giving good nursing care.

Registered Nurse

QNMU 2012 – 2017: National campaign for Minimum Nurse-to-Patient Ratios

Acknowledgement: By Lieutenant-Adddress A Brown

Image by QNMU © 2017
400 new Nurse Navigator positions:

This new nursing role helps patients navigate our complex health system and is currently being rolled out across Queensland.

Nurse Navigators care for patients who have complex health conditions and require a high degree of comprehensive, clinical care.

At a cost of $101.6 million, 400 Nurse Navigators will be employed by 2018/19.

With 240 Nurse Navigators already recruited, these roles also educate and help patients better understand their health conditions and enable them to self-manage or participate in decisions about their health care.

The Nurse Navigator role allows me to be flexible, innovative, adaptable, and customise the support and care required to assist our patients’ journeys through the health system more than any other role I’ve worked in.

Other key developments:

- Reviving school nursing services statewide through the new Primary School Nurse Health Readiness Program. 30 new school nurse positions have been created to provide vision screening for primary school children.
- Providing better regional health care, with the opening of a new tuberculosis clinic on Thursday Island servicing the Torres and Cape HHS.
- Restoring aged care services at Eventide Nursing Home (now called Brighton Health Campus).
- Revitalising and expanding health services at Wynnum through the new Wynnum-Manly Community Health Centre. Services include mental health, allied health, and BreastScreen.
- Restoring resident services previously provided by the Barrett Adolescent Centre by building the planned new facility at Prince Charles Hospital and four other complementary services. This facility will replace the Barrett Centre, Queensland’s only residential centre for young people with severe mental illness, and which was closed by the Newman/Nicholls government.
- Refunding public sexual health services at Biala Sexual Health Clinic.
What are some of the things we’re seeking from all political parties?

- **Continue rolling out legislated ratios** – Workloads continue to be a major concern for nurses and midwives in all sectors. We know that legislating the number of patients that can be safely allocated to a single nurse is the best way to address workload concerns, and areas that now have legislated ratios are starting to experience the benefits. The next phase of our campaign will not only aim to ensure ratios in areas where legislation already applies by improving the application of the BPF, it will also focus on rolling out ratios in the private and aged care sectors. We will focus on public reporting as a means to encourage other employers to agree to ratios that are safe and which put patient care first.

- **Protect our penalty rates** – Penalty rates are being cut in other industries, and nurses and midwives are rightfully concerned they could be next. While it was largely the federal government’s lack of intervention that saw the initial cuts handed down to hospitality and retail workers, the Queensland government does have a role to play – they can commit to protect penalty rates for public sector employees and ensure nurses and midwives are not targeted next.

Roles is key to ensuring we can continue to provide high quality care. The government’s ‘Nursing Guarantee’ policy, which saw an additional 4000 new graduates and 400 Nurse/Midwife Navigators employed, was a welcomed investment in our professions. But we need more nurses and midwives in secure employment and in our hospitals and community.

- **Expand the Nurse/Midwife Navigator and graduate programs** – Investing in the future of our workforce and creating new innovative nursing and midwifery roles is key to ensuring we can continue to provide high quality care. The government’s ‘Nursing Guarantee’ policy, which saw an additional 4000 new graduates and 400 Nurse/Midwife Navigators employed, was a welcomed investment in our professions. But we need more nurses and midwives in secure employment and in our hospitals and community.