RN-to-Patient Ratios Helping to Solve Nursing Shortage

Strong, effective ratio laws are a critical factor in helping to mitigate the effects of the nursing shortage. California, which adopted the first ratio law in the U.S., and Victoria, Australia, offer two good case studies.

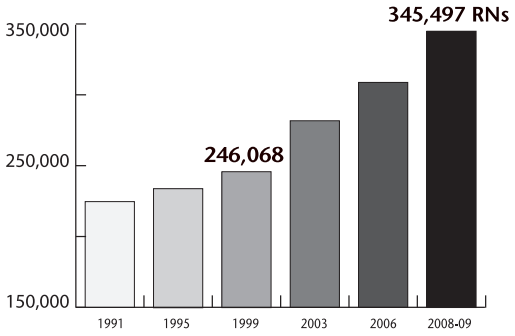
California

- **The number of actively licensed RNs in California increased by nearly 100,000** following enactment of the staffing ratio law, from 246,068 as of June 30, 1999 to 345,497 as of Nov. 30, 2008. *(Board of Registered Nursing data)*

- **Since the ratio law was signed, the number of actively licensed RNs has grown by an average of more than 10,000 a year, compared to under 3,000 a year prior to the law.** *(BRN data)*. At the time the law was passed, the BRN was predicting the annual increase would be just 2,000 a year.

Active RN Licenses

Nearly 100,000 New Licenses Since 1999



- **Vacancies for RNs at Sacramento area hospitals have plummeted 69% since early 2004** when the ratios were first implemented. (*Sacramento Business Journal, January 11, 2008*) Throughout the state many of California's biggest hospital systems have seen their turnover and vacancy rates fall below 5%, far below the national average.

- **The ratios have helped fuel a dramatic growth in student interest in nursing.** California nursing programs have expanded greatly in the years since the ratio law was enacted, as the profession has become more attractive, and due to the successful lobbying of CNA/NNOC for increased funding.

- **A sharp reversal in the trend of RNs entering and leaving California.**

- **Big gains in the number of new graduate and foreign trained applicants** who take and pass the RN exam and become new licensees each year in California.

- **A 60% increase in RN applications** in the years following enactment of the law.

Victoria, Australia

Victoria, Australia, which adopted nurse-to-patient ratios in 2000, experienced **a 24.1% increase** in the number of employed nurses **with ratios.**

NATIONAL NURSES ORGANIZING COMMITTEE
www.nnoc.net

CALIFORNIA NURSES ASSOCIATION
www.calnurses.org

01/09