



Speech by

**Mr G. HEALY**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

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Hansard 24 March 1999

**MOUNT LOFTY NURSING HOME**

**Mr HEALY** (Toowoomba North—NPA) (10.23 a.m.): Health Minister Edmond's refusal to overturn a decision by Queensland Health to demolish a unit at Toowoomba's Mount Lofty Nursing Home has a whole community outraged. The Minister's pathetic attempt to put the blame on the previous Health Minister is equally disgusting. There was a line item in the coalition Health budget before the last State election which clearly allocated \$350,000 in 1998-99 for the upgrade of the unit—\$350,000 to bring the unit up to workplace health and safety standards. The Minister has stated publicly that this amount of money would provide only an adequate sprinkler system.

In last Saturday's Courier-Mail, Fair Trading Minister Judy Spence admitted that the \$600,000 upgrade to her office was to accommodate 50 staff. The Government cannot tell me that \$350,000 would not have been sufficient to upgrade a unit that accommodates 14 poor old men. But where was the \$350,000 in the first Labor Budget after the election? Gone! Wiped out! These 14 men, one of whom is one of Australia's oldest surviving people with Down syndrome at the age of 64, are happy at Mount Lofty. It is their home; the wonderful staff have made it their home.

At a meeting that the member for Toowoomba South and I attended, the staff were so visibly upset that they were crying because of the Minister's decision. Not once in the six and a half years that I have been the member for Toowoomba North has one single staff member or member of the community approached me to complain that the unit in question at Mount Lofty was dangerous.

The Premier says that he is a compassionate man. Today's newspaper reports suggest that he will intervene. I make a plea to him to intervene in the situation, because the future and lives of those 14 men now depend on him and whether he is prepared to overturn this decision.

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