



Speech by

KEN TURNER

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Hansard 25 March 1999

ACUTE CARE SPINAL INJURIES UNIT, TOWNSVILLE

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (7.23 p.m.): The Beattie Government's commitment to provide long-term rehabilitation and care for north Queensland's spinal patients is most welcome. However, I encourage the Government to seriously reconsider the inclusion of an acute care spinal injuries unit. I have had several letters directed to my office relating to the horrendous pain and suffering endured by spinal cord injury patients during transfer to Brisbane for acute spinal treatment.

One of these people, Scott, received spinal cord injuries in a motor cycle accident. At the Townsville General Hospital tongs were drilled and screwed into either side of his head. He was then flown to Brisbane in the small Emergency Service aeroplane. The turbulence during the flight caused intense pain and air sickness but, because of the tongs screwed into his head and the risk of doing further damage to his injury, he was unable to move his head to stop vomiting all over himself. The tongs fell out of Scott's head three times and Scott had to endure the excruciating pain of having the tongs rescrewed.

From the location of the accident in Townsville to the PA Hospital in Brisbane, Scott was moved approximately 20 times. Scott now wonders what impact the constant movement and shifting had on his injury and how much extra damage was done to his spinal cord during the transfer. Scott is now a quadriplegic, working as a volunteer presenter for the spinal education awareness team and feels that, if he had been transferred immediately to a spinal injuries unit in Townsville, his injury would have been much less severe.

Scott spent 10 and a half months in Brisbane, causing enormous financial and emotional strain on his family. He was left without the support of loved ones. An acute spinal injury unit in Townsville would decrease the risk of further injury. I first brought this matter to the attention of the House in October 1998. Other States do not have the decentralised population that Queensland has. It is of paramount necessity that an acute care spinal unit be provided in north Queensland, and what better time than when the new \$200m hospital is being constructed in Townsville?
