



Speech by

**KERRY SHINE**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

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Hansard 16 October 2001

#### **AGED CARE**

**Mr SHINE** (Toowoomba North—ALP) (7.12 p.m.): For many residents in Toowoomba there is alarming concern over the state of the aged care system in Toowoomba. Mr Howard and the federal government define Toowoomba as overcatered for in aged care facilities. It is the reason that applications for more nursing homes, hostels and high-dependency care units have been refused. The irony is that almost every nursing home has a long waiting list. There is an alarming staff shortage and a desperate need for immediate high-dependency care in the area.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that there are 23,800 Darling Downs residents over 70, with almost half of them being Toowoomba residents. With such a large percentage of the Toowoomba population being in this age bracket, surely the federal government should realise that the aged care needs of this region cannot be dismissed.

One of the retirement villages I have been working with closely in my electorate is the Brownholme retirement village in Highfields, just on the outskirts of Toowoomba. Just last week I invited Senator Joe Ludwig and Labor candidate for Groom Leann King out to Brownholme to see the facilities and to listen to the residents' concerns relating to aged care.

One of the plans for the village was to establish a hostel and a nursing home that would provide high-dependency care for those residents who might require it in the long term. Their request is definitely justifiable. However, it has been denied. Because of this, they tell me that they feel like second-class citizens. The irony is that these people are first-class citizens of our state. They have paid their taxes, they have worked hard all their lives to provide a good life for their children, and they deserve respect from the federal government.

John Howard's representatives should do their jobs properly and get out into the community. They should see the extreme pressure that is being put on nurses because of the drastic staff shortages. They should talk to the people who are on waiting lists desperately needing high-dependency care. They should hear how these people feel like second-class citizens because their needs are being dismissed by the federal government. As their state elected representative, it breaks my heart to hear their demands and know there is a limit to what I can do. Aged care falls under federal government responsibilities, and what the federal government is doing in Toowoomba is not good enough. We need more beds, more staff and more high-dependency care units.

The federal government should not be complacent and rely on statistics to tell it whether Toowoomba is well catered for in aged care facilities. Maybe then it would understand that Toowoomba is far from overcatered for when it comes to aged care and that something desperately needs to be done.

Time expired.

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