



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Tuesday, 28 February 2006

RETIREMENT VILLAGES AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (8.24 pm): I note from the minister's second reading speech that the objective of the Retirement Villages Amendment Bill 2006 is consistent with the government's commitment to protecting vulnerable Queenslanders. There is no group more deserving than our retirees. I agree that the elderly who reside in retirement villages and aged-care facilities have worked and paid their dues—their taxes—and it is right to render back to them the appropriate care that they deserve.

My electorate has very little in the way of retirement villages. The Charters Towers electorate has a number of nursing homes which provide a high level of care to our elderly. However, I would like to raise some serious concerns. I believe that the government has a moral responsibility and duty of care to look after our elderly. We need to understand that some of the elderly in our retirement villages and aged-care facilities come to a point in life where they develop dementia. This means that they require 24-hour care. It is very, very stressful for their families. It comes to a point where the person needs to be upgraded to a facility that provides a high level of care.

In the Charters Towers electorate the Eventide aged-care facility is government owned. In 2001 a problem arose in relation to patients with dementia who were wandering. They were put back in the hands of their families for appropriate care. It is very stressful for them, as I said, to provide 24-hour care. At that time in 2001, the medical professionals indicated that they would upgrade the Pandanus Unit at Eventide to a high-care unit to care for dementia patients.

I would like to say, because this is a very important issue, that rather than that ward being upgraded for dementia patients 20 beds were removed and it was closed down. All those patients with dementia are on a waiting list of up to 400 people, along with people from Townsville and the Atherton Tablelands, when we had a wonderful facility. The facility is available, yet residents from Charters Towers, up to Hughenden and out as far as Georgetown who could utilise that aged-care facility have been put on a waiting list for Townsville.

This is a very important issue. Our residents are travelling to Townsville or to the Tablelands to be with their loved ones when a facility is available in Charters Towers. I want to bring this to the attention of the House. Two thousand of our residents are calling for the government to provide a dementia facility and to bring back those 20 beds that they moved from Charters Towers—which they had no right to do—to Townsville. Now patients have to go to Townsville, after being on the waiting list for two years, when there was a wonderful facility available in Charters Towers. I would like to bring that to the attention of the House. We want our 20 beds back.