



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Tuesday, 7 March 2006

QUEENSLAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (9.53 pm): I rise to bring to the attention of the House a subject that has many Queenslanders questioning what has happened to our once infallible Queensland Ambulance Service. Under consecutive conservative governments the Queensland Ambulance Service was well managed and met the needs of patients for emergency care. Even the former Labor Premier Wayne Goss was able to manage the Ambulance Service, but not Premier Beattie and this is without excuse. Premier Beattie became the first Queensland premier who could not manage the Ambulance Service and the first premier to introduce an ambulance tax on the public because he claimed the government could no longer afford to prop up the Queensland Ambulance Service due to too many people not contributing or subscribing to the ambulance fees.

After much protest from many sectors of the community to what was an unfair new tax the Premier stated that it was the only way to fix and create a better, well-funded Ambulance Service. After four years of turmoil the question must be asked on behalf of so many Queenslanders: why is our ambulance service in such a deplorable state when it was promised so much financial relief?

Can the Premier or the emergency services minister explain why Charters Towers' ambulance service, which services a district of almost the size of Tasmania and which has an ageing population, had its night-time roster service removed? As of last Sunday the Charters Towers Ambulance Station is now fully closed between the hours of 11.00 pm to 7.00 am, which is another kick in the guts to the local Charters Towers community and paramedics.

The Ambulance Service is supposed to be an emergency service where officers are available, ready and alert to assist victims in the quickest, fastest, safest time frame. Five minutes is a matter of life and death. Not only have our paramedics been dealt a severe blow by the government's controversial roster reform, now the government expects officers who complete a 10-hour shift to be woken up all hours of the night, to drive a 440 kilometre round trip and to be fresh, have their wits and provide appropriate care and save lives.

What has happened to the money being raked out of the community? Can this government give the Queensland people accountability and an honest, accurate figure as to how much money is generated from the ambulance levy and how much is actually returned to the Queensland Ambulance Service? Does this government still subsidise the Queensland Ambulance Service from its budget or has it cut its funding altogether? These are simple questions from ordinary Queenslanders demanding answers.

Mr SCHWARTEN: I rise to a point of order. I can answer that question; I think the honourable member wants a question answered there. About twice what the levy is, is the answer.

Mr KNUTH: I stand here tonight on request from the residents of Charters Towers and the Queensland public to challenge this government to answer these questions. I thank the minister for his answer and I will look to see if that is correct. I ask this government, which has been fortunate to inherit the most generously funded budget in Queensland's history as a result of the goods and services tax, to come clean on the facts and figures and tell the people of Queensland how much of the Queensland ambulance levy is actually returned to where it was promised.