



Speech by

**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS**

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## **CHARTERS TOWERS ELECTORATE, MATERNITY SERVICES**

**Mr KNUTH** (Charters Towers—NPA) (8.23 pm): I would like to raise serious concerns regarding the closure of maternity wards and obstetric delivery units in rural and regional Queensland. In the past 10 years the ability to have a child in your local area has been removed from a great majority of regional Queenslanders. The residents of the Charters Towers electorate would like to know why the government has allowed it to get to this situation. The greatest gift a family and community can have is to welcome a newborn baby into this world. For parents, it is unparalleled to anything else in their lives. Nothing in this world could measure the depth of joy that a newborn child brings to a family. Hospitals in the towns of Moranbah, Clermont, Hughenden, Richmond, Alpha and Aramac have lost the ability to deliver a critical part of health care for patients.

The state government is denying local women the ability to have an uncomplicated delivery surrounded by their family in their local surroundings. It is unacceptable to compel pregnant women to travel hundreds of kilometres away from their home town to a major coastal city to give birth to their babies. This is an unnecessary financial burden. It puts personal strains on mothers and separates them from their families for periods of up to three weeks during a very precious time of their lives.

It is not the mothers' fault that maternity services in home towns have closed down. It is vitally important to recognise the financial strain on families who pay the costs of travel and motel expenses for pregnant mums who are booked in and waiting for periods of up to three weeks before giving birth. These are the uncomplicated pregnancies. Many families are usually not informed or are completely unaware of patients' travel or motel subsidies that they can claim for the time they are away. I believe it is paramount that at all times Queensland Health provides information packs to advise all patients of what they can claim to help alleviate the financial costs for reasons of no fault of their own. This must be a minimum standard if we are going to take away their rights to have their babies close to their homes and families.

The whole issue begins with lack of doctors and not supporting doctors to maintain obstetric registration. Then there is no money for maintaining the units. The government then justifies its decision to remove funding to provide and train qualified midwives. The community gets done three times. This government caused the problem and then it makes it worse. This is a vital issue that needs to be rectified. It is paramount that funds are provided and that great incentive packages are granted to encourage nurses to work and be trained in rural and regional hospitals. It is well proven that if nurses are trained locally they will stay loyal to the hospitals and be strong members of the community. Our community needs nurses, and I inform the House that I am going to be a strong advocate for nurses in our local community.