



Speech by

**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS**

Hansard Wednesday, 14 March 2007

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## **EVENTIDE NURSING HOME**

**Mr KNUTH** (Charters Towers—NPA) (9.43 pm): Last year I raised a serious issue, and I tabled a petition containing 2,726 signatures opposing any plans to privatise the state government owned Eventide Nursing Home at Charters Towers. Also included in that petition was the need for the state government to provide adequate funding and staffing levels to enable the facility to function at full capacity.

Eventide has a unit called the Pandanus Unit, which was closed down in 2002 after 40 beds were removed to Townsville. Residents believed that the unit was going to be upgraded to a secure dementia unit only to receive the opposite news.

The city of Charters Towers was founded in 1872 and has an ageing population. The combined city and shire population is near 13,000. Eventide provides a service to people as far away as Richmond, yet the facility has no secure high-care dementia unit. This has caused a lot of grief and has separated couples and loved ones, some of whom have lived together for up to 60 years. At present there are four secure units available in the Tablelands and six in the Townsville district. However, there are up to 400 people on the waiting list. All that is required is small modification at the Pandanus Unit to meet the needs of the community.

We have a multimillion-dollar facility that is not operating to its full capacity, yet our elderly are forced to be separated from their family and loved ones and go to other care facilities in towns hundred of kilometres away. This is causing a lot of grief in the community. Some 2,700 petitioners understand the situation. It is ridiculous that Townsville residents are residing in Eventide and that Charters Towers residents are on the waiting list and are forced to go to Townsville or other care facilities.

Many families are holding on, trying to care and cope with the stress of looking after loved ones in difficult circumstances. The sad part is that we have a wonderful facility that has a unit that is closed.

It is estimated that within the next 20 years the number of people over the age of 70 will double, and in rural and regional Queensland the percentage will be higher. It only makes common sense, and it is a matter of ethics and principal, that the Pandanus Unit is fully reopened for the benefit of the whole community, particularly in the area of specific dementia care.

I call on the state government to allocate a portion of the \$9 billion injection of funds into the Queensland Health system to be used for the provision of a secure unit for dementia patients in Charters Towers and that urgent funding is granted to provide care to current dementia patients at Eventide until a dementia care facility at Eventide is provided.