



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Wednesday, 27 August 2008

ARAMAC HOSPITAL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (11.36 am): Today is a sad day to be living in rural Queensland. Today, as mentioned previously by the Leader of the Opposition, rural Queenslanders and the rest of the nation witnessed the disgraceful treatment this government dished out to the tax-paying residents of Aramac in closing down their hospital. There has been no community consultation and minimal consultation with staff, and so I refute the minister's statement in this House that there was much consultation. As the MP whose electorate takes in Aramac, I had no consultation whatsoever. A message left on my message bank yesterday afternoon from a representative of Queensland Health advised me that the decision had been made. That is no consultation whatsoever.

It is simply horrendous that these Queenslanders are not considered worthy enough to be informed and to be able to access a hospital in their own home town. Once again we see a medical service being determined by the mighty dollar. We see statistics govern the placement and distribution of health services. The minister's statistics have been distorted to set a perception of the need to downgrade Aramac Hospital services.

The minister did not mention the exploration and mining development taking place near Aramac, which is part of the Galilee Basin. He did not mention the elderly who have lived in the area for their entire lives. I understand that the hospital currently has three to four elderly patients residing at the hospital including one 94-year-old. The prospects for these patients are grim. In Aramac they are afforded quality care to ensure their final years are filled with dignity and respect. They are visited regularly by locals who adore them and value their senior role in the community.

What the government has also conveniently forgotten in this vast area is that the hospital service—the main referable hospital—is 170 kilometres away in Longreach. Hughenden to the north is 300 kilometres away. Aramac Hospital is the main referable hospital for the Muttaborra Primary Health Care Centre, which is 85 kilometres away. The sad thing now is that emergency patients will be transported elsewhere, when once emergency services were provided in their own town.

There are currently about 25 permanent and part-time staff employed at Aramac Hospital. This would make Queensland Health a significant employer in the town. This conversion to a primary healthcare centre will result in 22 staff out of a job. Now they will be forced to relocate to either Longreach or Barcaldine. This will have a devastating impact and effect on the town, with the school losing students.

Time expired.