



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Tuesday, 25 November 2008

HUGHENDEN HOSPITAL, OPERATING THEATRE

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—LNP) (9.55 pm): I would like to bring to the attention of the House a concern shown by residents of Hughenden and western Queensland, expressed in a petition that will be tabled by the shadow minister for health. The petition calls for an immediate recommission and upgrade of the operating theatre at the Hughenden Hospital to relieve the pressure on the Townsville Health Service District for elective and minor surgeries. It also calls for Queensland Health to prioritise the appointment of a flying surgeon to service regional and rural areas of north-west Queensland.

The question demands to be asked: in 2008, why are health services across rural Queensland being reduced rather than increased? Why is it that a once world-class health system has buckled under consecutive Labor governments to the point where rural and remote Queenslanders no longer have access to the medical treatment that was available to them many years ago? The closure of the operating theatres in both Hughenden and Richmond has outraged western Queensland. The theatres in both Hughenden and Richmond provided assurances to the residents that urgent medical attention would be available for people living in western Queensland if they faced life-threatening situations.

Mr Hoolihan interjected.

Mr KNUTH: No, operating theatres in Richmond and Hughenden were closed five weeks ago by the Labor government. You would know about this. I cannot believe that you have not taken a stand against this.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Darling): Order! The member for Charters Towers will direct his comments through the chair.

Mr KNUTH: This is another kick in the guts for regional Queenslanders. The Townsville Hospital is already struggling to cope with increasing pressures, but now it also has to accommodate patients who were easily accommodated in rural hospitals. The minister has stated that the theatres were closed due to the fact that they were old, did not meet sterility requirements and would not have passed accreditation. This can only be construed as an admission that this government cares so little about the health and wellbeing of rural Queenslanders that it could not be bothered funding the resources required to meet accreditation.

Rural patients have been severely disadvantaged by these closures. The discriminated patients in rural Queensland will now have to painfully endure either a 900-kilometre round trip in an ambulance to the nearest surgeon or a flight with the Royal Flying Doctor Service only to be placed in a bed, chair or trolley in the emergency ward of whichever city hospital has the time, personnel or resources needed to medically assist them. The LNP has made a statewide commitment to bring back to regional and rural centres medical services that have been withdrawn by Labor—and I hope that the Labor Party makes the same commitment. The LNP realises that rural and regional hospitals have the capacity to provide better services and are determined to see them properly resourced. This will relieve pressure on the major hospitals and boost health services across the state, for the benefit of all Queenslanders.