



Speech by

**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

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## **CHARTERS TOWERS, DEMENTIA UNIT**

**Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—LNP) (10.22 pm): Today I tabled a petition of over 2,200 signatures from the residents of the Charters Towers region calling on the minister to acknowledge that Eventide Aged Care Facility at Charters Towers has no dementia-specific unit and to acknowledge that families are forced to send loved ones hundreds of kilometres away to other care facilities separated from their local surroundings. This issue is one of the most heated and passionate issues I have ever faced. The Charters Towers district is not likely to slink off into the sunset on this one.

During the election campaign the LNP committed \$1.5 million to have a dementia-specific unit opened at Eventide within 12 months. The commitment caused much joy and a huge sense of relief throughout the local area. Members can imagine the pain and disappointment, even anger, I now hear from constituents as I travel around the electorate. People are desperate. They will not allow their loved ones to be taken away like some superfluous object to be placed over 500 kilometres away, far from their family and friends, to spend the remainder of their lives in what would seem like a foreign land. This is an absolutely appalling situation. Many of these patients have lived all their lives in the Charters Towers district, contributing their working lives to the area to become key figures in the community and now they are treated as cast-offs. There is a rising fury against the lack of a dementia unit in Charters Towers, especially given that such units are in other small towns.

The Pandanus unit at Eventide is well suited for such a unit. It is fenced and can be easily converted to house a dementia-specific unit. There is no issue with staff, as the Nurses Union has indicated it will not be a problem to staff the facility. People are no longer content to wait for something to happen in the distant future. They are determined to push this one through. There is a sense of loss in the area after feeling that a dementia unit was on the way after the LNP committed to have one up and running within 12 months. This issue will never go away. The Charters Towers region has an ageing population, yet it is unbelievable that a facility that takes in an area of 60,000 square kilometres has no dementia-specific unit. This petition is not pie-in-the-sky stuff; it is reality. I ask the Minister for Health what his decision would be if one of his loved ones were to be hauled off into the unknown far away from familiar faces and places. I once again specifically invite the new Minister for Health, Paul Lucas, to visit Charters Towers and to speak to residents about his plans for a dementia unit in the city. He would be welcomed with true country hospitality and would meet a very determined dementia and aged-care action group.