



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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ATHERTON HOSPITAL, CT SCANNER

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (9.13 pm): This morning I put a serious question to the Deputy Premier and health minister, the Hon. Paul Lucas, which was why, after five years, was the Tablelands community and its hospital still waiting for its much needed CT scanner? After being promised five years ago a CT scanner for Atherton Hospital, I am still waiting. Local medicos are threatening to leave unless the state government comes good with its promise.

In August 2008 in this House a question about the CT scanner was put to the former minister for health, the Hon. Stephen Robertson. He stated that in the not-too-distant future a tendering process would go out for a CT scanner for the hospital and it was hoped that the process would be completed by early in the year—to quote the minister—so Atherton will get that CT Scanner. Despite that promise, the scanner is nowhere in sight. The situation is being made worse by the 1,000 patients from the Tablelands who each year are forced to travel to Cairns for scans because their local hospital does not have a CT scanner. Although the Deputy Premier gave parliament an undertaking to look into the matter, which I appreciate, the matter has been looked into before. The fact is that Atherton Hospital was promised a CT scanner five years ago. It is well past time that the Bligh government delivered on its promise.

The need for a CT scanner is one of the most important issues for the Atherton Tableland and also for the city of Cairns and its surrounding districts as there are 1,337 people waiting for elective surgery at Cairns Base Hospital, which is stretched to capacity. A CT scanner would alleviate pressure on the Cairns Base Hospital by allowing surgery to take place in Atherton Hospital. It would also save patients and taxpayers massive transport costs and wasted travel time. It would also take pressure off our roads.

To provide this CT scanner is just plain common sense. It costs about \$500 to transport patients from Atherton to Cairns by ambulance and by helicopter about \$6,000 per hour. Add to this the cost of an accompanying nurse and we see that to not have a CT scanner at Atherton Hospital is an extreme waste of resources and time. As well, this process ties up local ambulance staff, which leaves the Tablelands vulnerable.

A scanner provides a whole range of surgical diagnoses, including safe post-operative care. It is beyond comprehension that a CT scanner was not provided years ago. A CT scanner would save millions in transport costs, free up our highways, reduce waiting times at the Cairns Base Hospital, allow accompanying nurses and ambulance officers to undertake their duties in their local area and would give local medicos the necessary equipment and the resources they need to carry out what they are supposed to do, and that is medical surgery.

An amount of \$60 million has been allocated to build a sports stadium on the Gold Coast. All I am asking for is the crumbs of that funding to provide the necessary equipment to improve the quality of life for people in a whole region.