



Speech by


**Hon. Curtis Pitt**

**MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE**

Hansard Thursday, 4 August 2011

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## CAIRNS, HEALTH SERVICES

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (3.33 pm): Yesterday a petition carrying 47 signatures calling for a new hospital on the south side of Cairns was lodged in what could be described as a good try despite the best efforts of the principal petitioner, a previous and likely future candidate for Mulgrave. I now table the remaining non-conforming section of the petition, containing more than 3,000 signatures.

*Tabled paper:* Non-conforming petition calling for the construction of an all-weather hospital for the Cairns region [\[5029\]](#).

It is said that people are not always sure exactly what they are signing up to. In the case of this petition, it was passed around the bar at the Grafton Hotel, and several people I know thought it was calling for a cyclone shelter to be built in the area. These people at least will be pleased to know that, thanks to the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and the Bligh government, in partnership with the Cairns Regional Council, a cyclone shelter capable of housing more than 1,800 people will be constructed at Edmonton. But the thrust of this petition was for an all-weather hospital, and, while I do not agree with all of its words, it is a very clear indication that people in the southern suburbs care about our future health needs. This is why the announcement last December that land for a future health precinct had been secured—again, thanks to the Bligh government—was so well received by local people.

I know that all Labor members in the Far North are proud of the government's massive job-creating investment of \$446.3 million for the redevelopment of the Cairns Base Hospital, which will see it remain the primary regional hospital. As I have said many times, most recently in my speech during the budget debate, I would like to see some sort of development on the Queensland Health land at Edmonton in the form of a primary health facility sooner rather than later. Any investment for a facility at Edmonton would be money well spent and, in time, that facility would grow to be a second supporting hospital for the region.

The petition was also critical of a lack of an evacuation plan in the wake of Cyclone Yasi. This issue was also raised at the community consultation session I attended at Edmonton in June to inform the review of the health services plan for the Cairns region. Following the unprecedented events in February this year, Queensland Health is working with other government agencies, including Emergency Management Queensland, on future disaster management responses in parallel with the health services review and it is expected to be completed by the end of 2011. I say again that I am committed to delivering the best long-term, sustainable health outcome not only for my local community but for the entire Far North Queensland region.