




Speech by

Tim Mulherin

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Hansard Tuesday, 30 October 2012

MOTION: AGED CARE

 **Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.05 pm): We have heard from a number of speakers tonight, but what this motion boils down to is that there is no good reason for this heartless government to be acting in this way. There is no good reason for treating the citizens it was elected to represent in this heartless manner. What they are doing is saying to elderly Queenslanders, 'You don't matter.' They are effectively kicking the elderly out of their homes saying, 'Fend for yourselves now.' It is probably one of the most callous, cold-blooded acts I have witnessed during my time in this House. It frankly defies belief.

If you spend a life working, raising your family and contributing to your community, we should be dedicating ourselves to caring for you in your twilight years. We have an obligation to ensure that your later years are as comfortable as possible. That is a basic human right. It is basic dignity. But what we have seen is this Premier washing his hands of responsibility to deliver aged-care services such as nursing homes. Last Thursday on radio while trying to blame the health boards for service cuts, Mr Newman was asked directly, 'So you are wanting to get out of aged care?' He answered, '... yes, exactly.' In just six months the LNP government has earned a reputation for sacking nurses and other front-line support staff, closing hospitals and reducing nursing home bed numbers. This is the same LNP government that declared it would protect and improve front-line services before the election.

The Premier said on radio his government is abandoning the delivery of aged-care services such as nursing homes. Yet the health minister is still pretending the slashing of nursing home bed numbers is a matter for the regional health boards to consider case by case. The minister has clearly not been telling the truth. The minister must stop hiding behind his regional health boards or else he should hand over his job and salary to someone who is willing to take responsibility. If the health minister continues to fail Queenslanders and take no responsibility for the board's decision, he will simply prove how useless he is as Minister for Health and how ineffective the LNP MPs are.

As long as the health minister hides behind the boards, he and his LNP colleagues, such as the member for Lytton and the member for Redcliffe, cannot give any guarantees to local communities about the future of their health facilities. This government has shown that it has little regard for dignity. This is a government that has shown very, very quickly that it has no regard for the basic needs of our community and certainly has no intention of living up to the high expectations Queensland had when it elected this Newman government. This is a government that has willingly sacked 14,000 people. This is a government that has launched a full-scale attack on community groups, on front-line services and on organisations that look after the needy and the underprivileged in our community. This is a government that is kicking residents out of caravan parks they have called home in many cases for decades. And this is a government that has now set its sights on some of our most vulnerable citizens, the elderly and the frail.

This callous Newman government has created uncertainty and anxiety over the future of nursing home beds at Eventide, Ashworth House, Cooina House and the Moreton Bay Nursing Care Unit in Brisbane. They have also alarmed and distressed the elderly and their families in state-run residential nursing homes across Queensland. The future for residents at these facilities at Jondaryan, Charters

Towers, Rockhampton, Kingaroy, Wondai, Nambour, Dalby, Murilla, Toowoomba, Kirwan, Warwick, Murweh, Roma and Maryborough is now uncertain. It is the cruellest and most distressing move to kick the elderly out on to the streets, but this cold-hearted LNP government have shown that even this disgraceful move is not below them.

I urge concerned residents, their family and staff at these residential facilities to contact their local members of parliament and ask those people who have been trusted to represent them where they stand on the issue. What does the member for Sandgate have to say on the closure of Eventide? What does the member for Redcliffe have to say? What does the member for Lytton have to say? Simply nothing! Their silence is deafening. How disgraceful!