




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

QUEENSLAND MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (12.35 pm): The explanatory notes to the bill state—

The Bill establishes the Queensland Mental Health Commission ... to drive ongoing reform towards a more integrated, evidence based, recovery oriented mental health and substance misuse system. It will be responsible for leading a cultural change in the way mental health, substance misuse (including misuse of alcohol and other drugs) ...

I fully commend this bill and I commend the minister for bringing it in. There is a need for mental health reform and an overhaul of the mental health system, and I believe this bill does that. Out of all the issues that people face, probably the most important will be that of their health. On many occasions I have seen people worrying themselves to death or to the point where they are driven to oblivion. Rural and regional Queensland has faced many issues over the years such as rural decline. We actually held a mental health forum on the tablelands. It was surprising how many prominent people within the community came out and put themselves forward as having suffered due to mental health. It is so important to address that. Sometimes the right medication can change a person's lifestyle or change a family and a community.

When Cyclone Yasi came to North Queensland the area it hit stretched from the inland area of Charters Towers to the southern tablelands. I appreciate the work that the previous ministers did at that time. They brought out psychologists and support workers. Some people were severely affected by its impact due to the loss of property value and seeing things for which they had worked their whole life destroyed in three or four hours.

It is getting harder and harder in rural and regional Queensland. We have seen the closure of our railways, the downsizing of our hospitals, the downsizing of our medical services and a lot of droughts and floods. It is important that we support these people the best way we possibly can but not look to things we can cut. The continual cutting of services or access to them can lead to these kinds of mental health problems.

I commend the minister. I argued with him in relation to the closure of the Healthy Lifestyle Program at the Charters Towers Neighbourhood Centre. Two shadow ministers came to Charters Towers, went through the neighbourhood centre and said what a great service it was and then it was cut. The Healthy Lifestyle Program that was held at that centre had a lot of elderly people doing Pilates, walking and all sorts of exercises. There was proof that the health in that community improved while that program was in place.

So I wanted to bring that to the minister's attention. I believe that Men's Sheds are a great and wonderful thing. A Men's Shed will open within the next few weeks in Charters Towers. It is surprising not only how many participants were involved in building it but also how many people want to get involved with the Men's Shed once it is open because they believe it is an opportunity to talk things out and to be with people who are lonely in order to help resolve mental health problems. Minister, this bill really goes a long way. It is great stuff and I fully commend the minister for the work that he has put into this. I fully commend this bill to the House.