




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

ADJOURNMENT SPEECH

Charters Towers, Eventide Nursing Home

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (12.30 am): Today on behalf of the residents of Charters Towers and surrounding districts I tabled a petition of 1,000 signatures vehemently opposing any plans to privatise the state government owned Eventide aged-care facility in Charters Towers. The petition is simple and does not ask for much. It simply calls on the government to recognise that Eventide has provided a wonderful service to our frail and elderly citizens since it was built in 1929.

Charters Towers and district have a massive ageing population—those who originally paid for and built this wonderful facility in the first place with their hard-earned tax dollars. The thought of Eventide closing down or being privatised has caused great angst among our elderly, both in Eventide and those who are expecting to enter the facility in the future. Many are panic stricken and terrified at what might happen to them. Eventide in Charters Towers is on the Health minister's list of eight nursing homes to be privatised. Others include Parklands, Townsville; Ashworth House, Zillmere; Eventide, Sandgate-Brighton; Moreton Bay Nursing Care Unit, Wynnum; Redlands Residential Centre, Cleveland; Eventide, Charters Towers; North Rockhampton Nursing Centre; and Yaralla Place, Maryborough.

The legitimate concerns of our elderly residents for their future is one of today's top concerns in Charters Towers. Residents have every right to feel safe in their twilight years, knowing there is a place of safety, affordability and closeness to family. In August 2012 the then opposition leader, John-Paul Langbroek, asked the former Premier, Anna Bligh, whether the Premier would confirm that Labor has reached a new low with its plans to privatise and sell off nursing homes. It is extraordinary that the current government now considers the privatisation of nursing homes to be a valid and ethical decision to take.

As reported in the *Townsville Bulletin* on 28 November 2012, a spokesman for the Minister for Health said that Lawrence Springborg completely ruled out the closure of the two North Queensland sites, Parklands in Townsville and Eventide in Charters Towers. It would be a serious breach of faith for this statement to be proven to inspire confidence and then to dash hopes and trust. The tight-knit community of Charters Towers has faced many challenges over the years, always with the typical resilience and strength symbolic of the bush. However, this issue has caused much trauma to our elderly residents who need security and protection and somebody to passionately push their case for them. Families of the elderly have also been impacted by any suggestion that Eventide may be privatised.

The community of Charters Towers is sending a clear message through this strong petition that it vehemently opposes any plans or proposals to privatise the Eventide aged-care facility now and in the future. The petition calls on the state government to recognise that the community has made its decision and to accept this decision.