




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

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Record of Proceedings, 20 March 2014

**MOTION: AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (12.21 pm): I rise to speak to the motion moved by the Minister for Health. I consider this a very big issue—probably one of the biggest issues we have faced since ‘Dr Death’ and the Health payroll crisis. I table an article that appeared in the *Tablelander* two weeks ago.

*Tabled paper:* Article from *Tablelander*, dated 11 March 2014, titled ‘Hospital set for meltdown’ [4710].

This article appeared at the time when Campbell Newman said that there was not an issue and doctors were happy. The article titled ‘Hospital set for meltdown—Resignations on the card’ reads—

ATHERTON Hospital’s services will be severely impacted if the State Government fails to change contracts proposed for senior medical officers (SMOs).

SMOs are hired under the Medical Officers Certified Agreement, but the state government has introduced a new contract which has local doctors reeling.

Atherton Hospital rural generalist Anthony Bloch said the contracts allowed ‘for unprecedented unilateral power without the ability to challenge it’.

Queensland Premier Campbell Newman said in State Parliament last week that doctors would be better off under the new contracts.

‘The contracts give them the same amount of money and allow them to get on and practise what they love,’ he said.

‘There are some great benefits to these new contracts.’

Dr Bloch, who has advanced credentials in anaesthetic and emergency, is set to resign when the new contracts come into effect, along with at least one other SMO at Atherton Hospital.

This is just the Atherton Hospital. It continues—

‘This hospital is run on five senior doctors, two who share one full-time role ...

‘I’m resigning. I’m 25 per cent of the SMO work force. You can’t run a health service without senior doctors.’

Registrar Ben Gerhardy said he would be forced to leave and find work outside of Atherton where senior doctors could sign off his training.

‘If the contract goes ahead I will no longer have supervisors here, so I will have to move interstate to have my training accredited,’ he said.

Without intervention, Dr Bloch said Atherton Hospital’s workforce would dramatically decline and the facility would be unable to admit patients.

‘We’d be an emergency department only with no inpatient beds, no maternity, no chemotherapy, no surgery, nothing,’ he said.

‘Every patient who needed admission would be transferred down to Cairns.

‘We’d admit anything from five, sometimes 10 patients in a 24-hour period. There are only four or five ambulances on the Tableland. How do you transport patients down to Cairns?’

I think this is a very important issue not just in terms of its impact on major hospitals but on rural and regional hospitals. We have been seeing rural decline. We are seeing the downsizing of our local hospitals. The effect of the exiting of senior medical officers will be worse.

The LNP is reading the Auditor-General's report and listening to the Auditor-General but not talking to the doctors. The SMOs are in the field dealing with issues day in and day out. They are professionals. They were out there campaigning by the thousands when Campbell Newman said that he had spoken to the SMOs and they were quite happy. They are now campaigning by the thousands and gaining momentum. The government did not ask the doctors if they would like to be forced onto contracts. They did not ask me or other Queenslanders. They are professionals who can get a job anywhere.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Dr Robinson): Order! Members, there is too much noise and chatter in the chamber. Could members keep their conversations down, please. I call the member for Dalrymple.

**Mr KNUTH:** The hundreds of emails coming to me from senior medical officers are saying that they have never seen as arrogant a government as this in the state's history or their lifetime. The government has moved the cameras out of the parliament so the public cannot see the government's dictatorial arrogance. We are starting to see, as a result of the forced implementation of contracts and smashing of public servants, that arrogance filtering out into the electorates of Queensland. As Campbell Newman walked to the booths for the by-election he could not believe the anger out there.

Those opposite can laugh, mock, ridicule and say that we need to get out of our subterranean existence. The broken-down, squawking parrot over here is having trouble speaking at this time. It is great that he is silent. The reality is what Queenslanders are feeling at present.

The best thing for the government to do is to put the cameras back in the chamber and go out and talk to the SMOs and listen to them. They are professionals. All they are asking to do is to do what they know best—that is, look after patients at our hospitals throughout Queensland.