



Speech By  
**Hon. Cameron Dick**


**MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 July 2015

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Ravenshoe, Community Recovery**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.53 am): As Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services, I wish to pay tribute today to the role played by Queensland Health and Queensland Ambulance Service personnel in the recent Ravenshoe explosion tragedy. The first responder after the explosion was paramedic Darrell Thompson, who bravely prioritised the treatment and movement of these patients from the explosion area to an area of safety where they were given further emergency care. At 12.05 pm, the Atherton Ambulance Station, the closest station but still 57 kilometres away, received a call for assistance. At 12.09 pm, the first of four ambulances were dispatched from Atherton to Ravenshoe. A minute later, at 12.10 pm, the Operations Centre of the Cairns ambulance notified the Queensland emergency medical services coordination centre of the incident. With that call, what had been an incident on the Atherton Tablelands became a statewide priority.

Helicopters were quickly dispatched from both Cairns and Townsville, arriving at 1.03 pm and 1.55 pm respectively. Then began the largest aeromedical movement of burns patients in Queensland history, as patients were transported to four regional hospitals by air or ambulance. Seventeen people arrived at Atherton, Innisfail and Cairns hospitals between 3 pm and 4 pm. On the Tablelands, Dr Alan Furness, the medical superintendent at Atherton Hospital, led the medical response. He, Dr Craig Farley and a team of nurses went out to Ravenshoe to support the paramedics on site, returning to Atherton later in the afternoon to treat patients along with the director of nursing, Ann Aitken. Directors of nursing Lesley Harris in Innisfail and Andrea O'Shea in Cairns all had their facilities ready and waiting for the injured patients.

Townsville Hospital received four patients between 5.30 pm and 7 pm who were placed under the care of Dr McCallum and Dr Senthuran. Now the process of transporting those needing more intense surgical intervention in treatment began. The CareFlight Challenger jet made three trips to Brisbane, and five Royal Flying Doctor Service aircraft made eight trips. Ten patients were taken to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital and one patient went to the Princess Alexandra Hospital before being transferred to Royal Brisbane. As the patients arrived, the Intensive Care Unit in Brisbane was headed by Professor Jeff Lipman and the Burns Unit was headed by Dr Michael Rudd. I visited burns victims at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital on Saturday, 16 June accompanied by the Minister for State Development, who, as honourable members would know, is a distinguished surgeon. I also met with a patient at the Cairns Hospital on 26 June who spoke very highly of the care she had received there.

While this was a shocking incident, let us be in no doubt that the victims of the Ravenshoe blast received the best possible care and attention from all involved. I will take the liberty of saying that all of us here in this place give our sincere thanks to all involved: the Queensland Ambulance Service; staff

from the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital; Cairns, Townsville, Atherton and Innisfail hospitals; the Queensland emergency medical services coordination centre; Retrieval Services Queensland; the Queensland government's air emergency management service; CareFlight; and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

I have singled out some people today, but there are many more who performed heroically on the day. I had the honour, in the company of the member for Dalrymple, of being able to attend Atherton Hospital, the Ravenshoe Ambulance Station and the Ravenshoe Primary Health Care Centre to thank some of the people who performed so well under pressure that day and in the weeks following and who are still caring for burns victims. The way they responded represents not only the best of our health system but also the best of Queenslanders. I pay tribute to all of them here in this place.