



Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**


**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

---

Record of Proceedings, 15 October 2015

**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Atherton Hospital, Upgrade**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (2.42 pm): Yesterday I tabled a petition containing 5,588 signatures calling for an urgent upgrade to the Atherton Hospital. This petition of the residents of the Atherton Tablelands draws to the attention of the House the critical need to upgrade the Atherton Hospital. The residents of the Atherton Tableland have waited long enough for a new hospital and they call on the government to replace the facility as a matter of priority and urgency. The current facilities are outdated and inefficient. Rather than spending large sums of money on more bandaid solutions, the petition requests that the money be put into the redevelopment of a new facility. A new upgraded hospital would attract a broad range of specialists that patients currently have to travel to Cairns, Townsville and Brisbane to access. A new hospital would ensure that patient care and emergency services are maximised. An upgraded hospital would also relieve pressure on the Cairns Hospital, provide an alternative hospital during severe weather events, provide more specialists to consult patients and also incorporate a training facility.

Many of the burns victims from the Ravenshoe cafe explosion received their initial treatment at the Atherton Hospital. The unprecedented emergency resulted in the patients who were being treated in the hospital being urgently discharged in order to make room for the critically injured and freeing up the staff to assist with the emergency. Without any doubt, the fantastic work on the day resulted in much better outcomes for the injured. However, we need to recognise that this was done under extreme pressure.

On a recent tour of the hospital with the Minister for Health, Cameron Dick, we were able to see firsthand how desperately this hospital needs an upgrade. The small group could hardly fit into the emergency department. The space is just too small and well below the standard one would expect in an emergency department in 2015. The lack of air conditioning in the tropical location means that unscreened windows are left open to create air flow. This exposes patients to all manner of bugs and germs and, again, this is just not up to today's standard. The hospital has had its use-by-date. It is becoming unworkable and cramped and there is a high cost of maintenance. This has been recognised for many years.

I commend all those who work at the Atherton Hospital in such outdated conditions. This has been acknowledged by the community, as is evident by the sheer size of this petition which reveals the massive support for the upgrade of the hospital. We call on the state government to come up with the funds to fast-track the approval for a new upgraded hospital to provide a much needed health boost to the Atherton Tablelands and surrounding districts.