




Speech By
Barry O'Rourke

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 16 July 2020

**HEALTH COMMUNITIES, DISABILITY SERVICES AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY
VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE**

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (3.17 pm): I rise to speak in support of report No. 30, *Investigation of the closure of the Earle Haven residential aged care facility at Nerang*. The aged-care facility formed part of Earle Haven Retirement Village—namely, Hibiscus House and Orchid House—which closed on 11 July 2019, leaving 69 vulnerable aged-care residents without appropriate care. The company that was running the aged-care facility at the time was HelpStreet Villages Pty Ltd, which had removed essential equipment from the aged-care facility and told staff that they were out of a job. Management simply called triple 0 to deliver a bulk evacuation. The requirement was a fleet of ambulance and numerous health staff to support, comfort and transport the 69 residents to other aged-care facilities. These residents were confused, upset and had no understanding of what was happening.

The organisation had taken out computerised medical equipment so that staff were unable to work out what medications had been given. They removed some of the bedding and some food, which are the absolute essentials when providing a health service. The relocation of these residents was reasonable to ensure their health and safety needs were met. Those who were supposedly in charge of the facility were unable to show a suitable plan as to how they were going to ensure that residents' needs were met.

What happened at Earle Haven on the Gold Coast was absolutely disgraceful and it is not good enough. It cannot be allowed to happen again, and that is what this report is about. The report makes 12 recommendations, and most of the recommendations fall within the realm of the federal government. Over recent months we have heard numerous stories about aged-care facilities calling on the federal government to review their aged-care funding. They are struggling financially to meet the increasingly complex needs of our aged-care residents. Our Prime Minister and the federal government should hang their heads in shame for treating our ageing Queenslanders in such an appalling way.

Leading Aged Care Services Australia provided a report some months ago concerning some 200 aged-care facilities that are struggling financially and at an unacceptable risk of going broke. Insufficient federal funding has led to the stories we heard at some aged-care facilities which have not provided high-quality care for residents. They are so underfunded that they are running with a skeleton staff. Our ageing Queenslanders need to be looked after and provided with high-quality aged care.

I want to thank the ambulance staff, health officials and staff from the facility on the day of the closure for the great work they did in supporting those very vulnerable people and helping transport them to other facilities while they were very distressed and upset about everything that was going on in their lives. The recommendations in this report are about making aged care better for our loved ones. They deserve to be treated with dignity and provided with high-quality care. Our ageing Queenslanders deserve the best. I commend the report to the House.