




Speech By
Trevor Watts

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Record of Proceedings, 25 March 2021

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Toowoomba, Quarantine Facility

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (2.55 pm): I rise to talk about one of Toowoomba's favourite sons, Clive Berghofer. He has been a great citizen for Toowoomba. He has donated millions of dollars to local sport and health facilities. One of the things that has been concerning him greatly in recent times has been the suggestion that a quarantine hub would come to Toowoomba. There are many reasons he is concerned about this, not least of which is the reputational damage it could cause to Toowoomba. Clive put together a petition which has been tabled in this House. There were 8,276 people who gave their name and personal details to this House so that their objection to this facility could be recorded. I will go into a little bit about why their objection should be recorded, but first I want to table a letter from the Premier's office.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 25 March 2021, from the Chief of Staff, Office of the Premier and Minister for Trade, Mr Jim Murphy, to the member for Toowoomba North, Mr Trevor Watts MP, regarding regional quarantine facility [408](#).

The letter states—

As stated in my previous correspondence of 12 February 2021, the Queensland Government is committed to exploring options for a regional quarantine centre, in consultation with the Federal Government, industry and local communities.

There has been no consultation with our local community. That is why 8,000 people have signed the petition. They are concerned about what will happen with our hospital. We have seen a growth of 18 per cent in ambulance ramping at the hospital right now, and that is with zero COVID in Toowoomba. What happens if you bring 1,000 people to Toowoomba? The statistics tell us that there will be cases that will take our paramedics off the road, that will take our ambulances out of Toowoomba, that will take our doctors out of their surgeries and that will have the potential to shut down our health facilities.

Our health facilities are already struggling so why would the government risk this? If they were going to risk it, why would they do it without talking to anybody in Toowoomba apart from one proponent? We all know that the Wagners can build a great facility and I do not doubt they could manage it better than what we have seen currently. The report from the first quarantine outbreak stated—

With the absence of a scientific determination, the cluster is most likely to be the 'result of multiple weaknesses in infection prevention and control practices'.

That is the current standard that is happening here in Brisbane. First, we need to fix this system. We do not need to bring it to a regional centre where we have limited health facilities that are already overwhelmed. We are willing to participate to help find a solution for this, but not in the absence of any communication. What happens to our police service? What happens to our hospital? What happens to our anaesthetist? What happens to the one negative pressure room we have in Toowoomba if we bring thousands of positive cases into Toowoomba for quarantine? We simply do not have the facilities to cope. I urge people to look at the petition and listen to the people of Toowoomba. They have spoken.