




Speech By
Trevor Watts

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2021

MOTION

Health System

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (5.52 pm): Firstly I would like to thank the doctors, nurses, paramedics and chopper pilots who provide the services that we receive in our region of Toowoomba. Out of great tragedy comes an opportunity. In 2015 there was a tragedy in Toowoomba. A young lad called Brayden Smith needed emergency neurosurgery. It was not available in our hospital and he sadly passed away. There is a campaign running that talks about every second counts. I table the petition page.

Tabled paper: Great White Campaign Inc. document, undated, titled 'Every Second Counts' [888](#).

When we are dealing with medical facilities every second does count. No matter how good your doctors and nurses are, no matter how good your paramedics or chopper pilots are, if you do not have the facilities that are required for that emergency then you are in trouble. In Toowoomba we do not have neurosurgery facilities. As we look at building a new hospital in Toowoomba we should consider including neurosurgery facilities to honour Brayden and help other people in our region who need that facility, whether it be from stroke, a car accident or any other incident that requires a neurosurgeon.

The member for Bancroft asked us to bring him a policy. I have a policy for him: let us fund a hospital in Toowoomba. Let us actually commit the money and build it. Alternatively, if the government cannot follow that policy, maybe it could try a public-private partnership—get someone else to pay for it—and sign up to pay it off over 25 years.

The people of Toowoomba need health services now. If we start building today it will still take five years. We have an ageing population. Our over 65s are increasing as a percentage of our overall population. Our hospital is at capacity. Our doctors and nurses are doing the very best they can, but if the built environment is not up to scratch, if the built environment is 25 years old, if the built environment needs updating, then there is nothing they can do. Toowoomba is No. 1 on Queensland Health's list of places to build a hospital, but all we have seen in this budget is trickery, smoke, mirrors and illusion. I ask the government to build the hospital via a public-private partnership and give the people of Toowoomba what they want. It is one of our biggest employers. We know the health crisis will get worse. There is an opportunity for this minister to stand up and do something positive for the people who live west of the range and that is build a new hospital. The government invested the money in getting a plan for a hospital drawn up. Do not leave it on a dusty shelf. The policy should be to build the facilities that we need to take our health services forward. That is the policy, member for Bancroft. That is the policy I encourage the minister to implement.

I urge the minister to fight the other ministers for the money that his department deserves so that it can build the facilities that Queenslanders want. We on the hill pay our taxes. We do not deserve a second rate health service—not because of the people working there, but because the facility is not up to scratch. We have people who need surgery who catch a taxi—paid for by the state government—down to Brisbane. They get their surgery and catch a taxi back up.

I am pleased to hear that the day surgery, something I have campaigned hard for, is going to be built. This is a finger in the dyke. The tsunami of medical incidents on the range and the Darling Downs will get worse and we are going to need more helicopters, more paramedics and more ambulances if a hospital is not built. It will get really busy on the Warrego Highway and on the helipads, because people will be moved down to Brisbane for operations that could easily be done in Toowoomba if the facilities were provided. That facility could be built if the money was there, if there was cash on the table, if there was a commitment and a will and a desire to serve the people of Queensland, particularly my constituents in Toowoomba and the people of the Darling Downs, but that will is lacking. It is not there. If it was there we would not be hearing about smoke and mirrors in the budget. We would not hear about a Future Fund that is going to fund this and that and everything else. It will take over a billion dollars to build our hospital. Get on with the job: build a hospital in Toowoomba and put in a neurosurgery facility.