




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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ADJOURNMENT

Burdekin Electorate, Health Services

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (7.10 pm): Just over two weeks ago I and the member for Mudgeeraba, the shadow health minister, toured a large portion of the Burdekin electorate to talk about health services. As part of that tour, we visited hospitals at Bowen, Collinsville, Dysart, Moranbah and Clermont to take on board people's concerns when it comes to health services in their respective communities. In Bowen we talked about the need for maternity services and an increase in allied health services and in Moranbah clearly the need for a new and upgraded hospital in that community.

The budget handed down yesterday spoke about a record investment in health and revealed increases in coal royalties. I am sure that the people of Clermont took an interest in that comment. Why? It is because Clermont is in coal country. Despite the so-called record investment in health, that town still does not have a permanent doctor at the hospital after four long years of lobbying this government. The town could have had two doctors thanks to the work of Clermont4Doctors but both have walked away, and what is the key reason for that? It is the budget—well, at least according to the Mackay Hospital and Health Service. According to that service, \$1.5 million for a four-person team of health professionals is unjustifiable. What is unjustifiable is that this government refuses to step in and help my rural communities. After all, yesterday we were told that the budget put health care first and that to pay tribute to our health workers we needed to make sure that our health system has the infrastructure, technology and resources it needs.

What the people of Clermont know is that their health care has not been put first and that their town does not have the health resources they deserve. All of this is happening while it is their region carrying the lion's share of the increase in coal royalties. It is time for that health hypocrisy to end. It is time for 90-year-old women who are forced onto the highway to have to travel to Emerald to see a doctor to end. I was contacted by a public servant in Clermont last week who has to undertake a 400-kilometre round trip for a blood test. The crisis that is the rural doctor crisis in communities like Clermont and Dysart is real. It is impacting on those communities.

We talk about attracting people back to the bush. We talk about attracting families back to those communities and the very first question they ask of course is, 'What are the health services like and what is the education system like?' In both cases there are issues in those respective portfolios. There is a shortage of teachers throughout those rural areas and, more importantly, there is a chronic shortage of medical practitioners and it seems to be beyond the capability of this government to solve that issue. I will continue raising that issue in this place until such time as we get a permanent doctor in the Clermont community.