




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 10 May 2023

ADJOURNMENT

Agnes Water, Health Services

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (7.26 pm): Agnes Water and 1770 are arguably one of the top places in the Burnett electorate. It has the reef at its doorstep, it has beaches for days, awesome small businesses and very welcoming and friendly locals. However, it is missing something that is vital for any community: there is no health infrastructure for 125 kilometres, with no Queensland Health facility in the region. We are lucky that the area currently has two hardworking doctors who support a population of up to 6,000. In peak times this population expands by another 5,000. That is a population of around 10,000 in the care of two GPs and paramedics. These two doctors are feeling the pressure and very rarely leave the area or stop for a family holiday. They know that if they do, the community will be put at risk. This serious issue should not rest on the shoulders of these two individuals.

We know that for around 20 years there has been very little change to the level of service delivery in Agnes Water. Currently, residents have no choice but to travel a three-hour round trip to Bundaberg or Gladstone for hospital care or specialist treatment. It is also important to note that due to the locality of the Discovery Coast, residents access both the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service and the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service. This is a real issue. It complicates intake and referral processes. Often the referrals say, 'The client is out of our catchment,' with no-one accepting responsibility for where that client lives.

It goes without saying that we desperately need a health and hospital presence in the Agnes Water community. Almost exactly one year ago I asked the Minister for Health to advise on any plans to roll out further health services and associated infrastructure for the Discovery Coast region. I thank the minister for her response as it gave our community some much needed hope. The minister advised that the Department of Health recently supported an application from the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service to the Commonwealth Department of Health for the establishment of a multipurpose health service in Agnes that would provide an opportunity to deliver health and aged-care services, but unfortunately 12 months has passed and we have heard nothing. We would love the answers. A multipurpose health service would quite frankly be a life changer for residents. We need it to become an immediate priority for the Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service. A promise has been made and I will not stand to see this promise broken. The residents of Agnes Water and 1770 deserve access to health care just like everyone else. I look forward to hearing an update from the minister in the very near future.

Meanwhile, a huge thanks must go to Impact Community Services' Managing Director, Tanya O'Shea, and Pam and their team who did a pop-up care clinic over the Easter weekend in Agnes Water. They saw a very serious problem emerging with both local doctors closed for the weekend, so they acted quickly. They treated more than 70 patients over four days. The patients presented with a range of urgent illnesses and injuries such as wounds requiring sutures, respiratory issues, earaches, dental

issues, broken bones, vomiting and shortness of breath. A number of people who attended the clinic indicated that if the clinic had not been available, they would have suffered through their condition or simply have done nothing, and it could have been a lot worse. We have to remember that Bundaberg or Gladstone are 1.5 hours' drive away. We simply cannot afford delays on this project. Thank you.