



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Thursday, 18 October 2007

HEALTH SERVICES, CARDWELL

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (7.11 pm): I rise tonight to express my serious concerns about the delivery of health services and medical care in Cardwell following advice from the town's only general practitioner that he can no longer tolerate the circumstances in which he is forced to practise. Frustrated and concerned residents in Cardwell have written to the Premier pleading with her to intervene in an attempt to convince the only doctor at the Cardwell Family Practice to keep the surgery doors open. These concerned Cardwell residents have been agitating for enhanced healthcare facilities and resources for several years. I have been in regular contact with the Cardwell Community Health Support Group about the inadequacy of the Cardwell community medical centre to deliver necessary health services due to the lack of space in this poorly designed facility as well as the pressure on the local doctor, who has been carrying the practice alone for several years without any support or relief.

The Cardwell community and the local doctor, Dr Gabriel Roux, have had enough of the consistent failure of Queensland Health to address the ongoing health service delivery issues in Cardwell. A desperate letter from Dr Roux to the health minister, Stephen Robertson, in mid-July this year met with a disappointing response from the minister in early September which has prompted Dr Roux to consider his position at the Cardwell Family Practice. Indeed, Dr Roux has taken the step of giving four months notice that he will have to terminate his lease at the Cardwell Community Health Centre. Dr Roux has made a last-ditch attempt to secure support from Queensland Health by appealing to the local Queensland Health district operations manager. To date there has been nothing but very disappointing bureaucratic responses from Queensland Health, which is maintaining that because Dr Roux is not employed by it it is not its problem. It certainly will be its problem when he is forced to walk away from his position at Cardwell and the community of some 1,400 people is left without a GP.

The Cardwell community has a large number of older Queenslanders, many of whom are pensioners, an aged-care facility with 52 permanent residents who have demanding health and medical needs and a large Indigenous community, which has its own particular set of health issues. I have written to health minister, Minister Robertson, supporting Dr Roux and the Cardwell Community Health Support Group explaining that it is imperative that the community of Cardwell have a practising GP available to them in view of the fact that the nearest alternative medical facilities both north at Tully and south in Ingham are 50 kilometres away from Cardwell. I have urged the minister to consider this issue very carefully. This is not a GP making unreasonable claims; this is a GP that has demonstrated a strong commitment to his local community by delivering medical services there alone for seven years. I urge the minister to act swiftly to keep a practising GP in Cardwell. Queensland Health and the state government must not abandon the Cardwell community by hiding behind a bureaucratic excuse.