



RACHEL NOLAN MP

Member for Ipswich

Booval Professional Centre
125 Brisbane Rd BOOVAL

PO Box 98
BOOVAL Q 4304

Ph: 3202 3452
Fax: 3202 4778

Email:
ipswich@parliament.qld.gov.au

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COAG AGREEMENT MUST TAKE NURSING HOME PATIENTS OUT OF HOSPITALS

Today's Council of Australian Governments' decision to look at ways to take nursing home patients out of public hospitals must be moved quickly to relieve the enormous pressure on hospitals like Ipswich, local Member Rachel Nolan said today.

The Howard Government has chronically under-funded nursing homes in Australia, creating a severe shortage for people who are sick, unable to care for themselves and need nursing home care.

This means that right now there are 27 people in Ipswich district hospitals unable to go home but waiting for a nursing home bed. At times the number has been higher than 40.

This is an horrific situation for these people and their families. They're not so sick that they need to be in a clinical environment but they are simply left there – sometimes for weeks – waiting for someone in a nursing home to die to free up a space for them.

There are also obviously serious implications for the efficiency of Ipswich hospitals and our ability to put through people who need other non-urgent procedures. The fact that the Howard Government has let this situation sit at Ipswich hospital and in hospitals like it all across Australia, displays a real lack of humanity and a serious unwillingness to provide proper care for the aged.

At today's COAG meeting, the Premier's have had a big win by even getting the Howard Government to put this issue on the agenda. The plan now is that a task force will address this and other health issues and report back by December.

This is an issue on which I've campaigned for some years and it is now very much time that the Howard Government did something about it.