



Speech By  
**Lachlan Millar**


**MEMBER FOR GREGORY**

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Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2019

**MOTION**

**Queensland Health; No Confidence in Minister for Health**

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (5.42 pm): On behalf of my constituents in Gregory, I rise to speak in support of the motion. In March last year the new member for Murrumba gave his address-in-reply speech. As the newly appointed health minister, he told us that health is a priority of the Palaszczuk Labor government. He said, 'I know because it was on the side of the bus.' That is in *Hansard*. The member for Murrumba told the House that the Palaszczuk Labor government would 'make sure our health services care for Queenslanders no matter who they are, what they do or what part of the state they live in.' I am here to say that it does not feel like that in the bush.

Our bush maternity services are under threat. To see this you need go no further than the *Sunday Mail's* 'Bush Baby Crisis' campaign. In regional Queensland birthing centres such as Theodore and Chinchilla do not exist because the Labor Party have no interest in rural Queensland. The best they can come up with is DIY birthing kits that are given to expectant young mothers. Middlemount mum Sarah Berghauser was on a merry-go-round of three hospitals before giving birth in her bathroom. Her husband was talked through the breech delivery by a paramedic on the phone. Sarah wanted to deliver her baby, Naomi, at the nearest hospital, but Dysart no longer has birthing facilities so they planned to deliver their baby at Mackay Hospital 300 kilometres away. Shocking data from doctors revealed that babies born in Queensland country towns where maternity services have been closed were dying at a much higher rate than newborns in other rural centres.

It is maternity services and other medical treatments such as renal dialysis that I have been calling for over the past 12 months or more. More than 600 residents in Gregory signed a petition which I tabled in parliament recently, yet those calls have been ignored by the minister and this Labor government. It is having a devastating impact on families in the electorate of Gregory and people like Ian Williams, from Emerald. Ian's life is only sustained by renal dialysis, but he cannot get it in Emerald so he has to take the bus to Rockhampton for his treatments. Ian can only travel according to the bus schedule, and it is a six-hour round trip assuming there are no stops or delays on the road. His specialist prescribed five hours of dialysis three times a week on alternating days from week to week. Due to the clash of bus and hospital schedules he does not receive the prescribed amount of dialysis, nor does he receive treatment according to the prescribed timetable. I saw Ian when he popped into my office last week, and it was clear that he cannot sustain this travel schedule much longer. He may have to move, leaving his family and friends behind.

As both *Queensland Country Life* and *Rural Queensland Today* have reported, Ian is not the only such case. Constituents in Longreach who require renal dialysis have had even greater challenges. Their trip to Rockhampton is 14 hours minimum with no delays and no stops on the way. When you add in the treatment times, it is impossible to go home between treatments. For Lyndell and her husband, Neil Polkorny, the lack of a dialysis chair at the Longreach Hospital has meant they have had to quit

their jobs. They have had to lock up their house in Longreach and they are subsisting in a cabin at a Rockhampton caravan park so that Lyndell can receive treatment. Because of the lack of a chair in Longreach they have been there for over four months with no solution in sight. Both the Longreach and Emerald hospitals serve large districts and are more capable of providing such a service. Maybe the explanation is not a difficulty in installing dialysis chairs: maybe it is a staffing issue.

I was told that the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service is having difficulty finding renal nursing staff. I was told their solution has been to transport patients from Woorabinda into Rockhampton and even to bring patients from Gladstone into Rockhampton. It would make sense of media reports that, while the number of Health bureaucrats has grown under the Palaszczuk government, the number of front-line nurses and doctors in the bush has fallen.

Last year the minister commissioned an independent expert review of the provision of renal services in Queensland. The review has been delivered to the minister but he flatly refuses to release it. By doing so he undermines public confidence in his administration. What could be so explosive in a review for planning purposes? Renal dialysis is a treatment that we should be able provide in Longreach and Emerald. People are having to leave Longreach, their families and jobs, to receive that care whether it is in Townsville or Rockhampton. Young expectant mothers being sent DIY birthing kits is unacceptable in a country like Australia and unacceptable in a state like Queensland. If you want to grow the bush, if you want to invest in the bush, you have to provide services in the bush. Giving expectant mothers DIY kits is unacceptable and shameful. Labor, you should be ashamed of that!