




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2022

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Gregory Electorate, Renal Dialysis Services

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (2.24 pm): As members know, for years I have been fighting for renal dialysis services in my electorate. It is heartbreaking to see your constituents having to lock up their homes and move to Rockhampton, Mackay or Townsville to receive this treatment. They live in so-called temporary accommodation because Queensland Health calls it a temporary relocation. It often means caravan parks. I have constituents who have been living like this for six or seven years. That is how temporary it is. Constituents like Ian Williams of Emerald have died waiting for the service to be provided.

Members would understand my delight when the health minister announced that renal dialysis services would commence at the Longreach Hospital in the middle of this year. It will bring home families and sustain life for patients in Longreach and all surrounding towns, such as Barcaldine, Blackall, Isisford, Yaraka, Jundah and many more. I have asked the minister whether recruitment has started for the renal nurses required. We have a housing crisis in the west which will make recruitment difficult. It would break our hearts to have dialysis chairs but not be able to use them because of staffing.

In 2018 the Labor government said it would review access to renal dialysis across regional Queensland. I thought, 'Great, both Longreach and Emerald hospitals will get their chairs.' Just on the parameters of population and distance to the next nearest service, the need in Longreach and Emerald does stand up. I was astonished and distressed to see Emerald Hospital completely overlooked. For the life of me I cannot understand how this can be justified. The dialysis procedure takes a minimum of four hours, maybe six. Then add the time for the patient to drive to the hospital. It cannot be done in a single day return trip. Patients lose their employment and, worse, patients do not get the full weekly cycle of treatments prescribed by their specialist. There sits Emerald. It is a hub hospital for an area nearly the size of the state of Tasmania.

The Queensland Central Highlands has a population of 28,000 people. It is a minimum three-hour drive one way to Rockhampton Base Hospital, if there are no holdups on the road. That is six hours driving, plus, let us say, five hours treatment. That makes each treatment day a 12-hour day. It cannot be done on a sustained basis two or three times a week. People do die. We look enviously to the services given to Charters Towers, a population of 8,000 less than two hours from Townsville, or Ingham, 1½ hours to Townsville with a population of 4,375. I do not begrudge them getting their renal dialysis. In fact, I welcome that Charters Towers gets their dialysis. But I really feel that Emerald is being overlooked and missed. We have a population of over 28,000 people. We are a major regional town, or city almost, in Queensland but renal dialysis is three hours away. I call on the health minister, I call on the Palaszczuk government, to please put renal dialysis in Emerald.