




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Gregory Electorate, Renal Dialysis

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (2.25 pm): I rise to express the outrage felt by my constituents at the continuing lack of renal dialysis services in Gregory. The situation is rightly viewed as scandalous. It has a devastating impact on people's lives as they require this treatment to sustain their life and they are required to have dialysis multiple times each week. This means that they either leave their communities for good or are forced to lock up their homes and businesses and 'temporarily relocate' to receive treatment in centres such as Mackay, Rockhampton or Brisbane. For people like Darren of Ilfracombe, this temporary relocation has continued over many years and now has put his life in limbo. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition met with Darren's partner in Rockhampton recently. I cannot tell you what they said, because it would be too heartbreaking for this House to hear what Darren is going through. For people like Wendy McPhee, it will mean leaving Emerald. The loss of Wendy and her husband, Adjunct Professor Dr Ewen McPhee, will be a huge blow to the entire Central Highlands, as they are a mainstay in providing primary health care.

Petitions, questions, written representations—nothing seems to be getting through. We thought we had made progress in 2020 when in the election campaign the Palaszczuk government committed \$27.7 million for rural and regional renal dialysis programs. In May 2021, the minister announced that Longreach would receive two nurse assisted dialysis chairs to be operational in the second half of 2022. Construction has not even begun, and we hear excuse after excuse. Meanwhile, an operational unit for the Emerald Hospital has not even been mooted.

Locals have raised nearly \$200,000 in donations to help secure even one chair, but government red tape means that it cannot be used. Meanwhile, the rural and regional dialysis programs have put chairs in Ingham, Charters Towers and Bowen. Without begrudging anyone's access to these services, the people of Gregory are right to ask: why are we being ignored? These three centres have been chosen by the government for the service, despite the fact that all three are closer to Townsville Base Hospital—90 minutes. The nearest base hospital to Emerald, which is Rockhampton, is three-plus hours away, and Longreach is a long way from any base hospital.

The government's priorities become even more puzzling when you look at the population figures. The town of Emerald had a population of nearly 15,000 in 2021 and services a population of 28,000 across the Central Highlands. In contrast, Bowen has a population of 9,360, Charters Towers has a population of 7,979 and Ingham has a population of 6,304. I do not begrudge those towns' access to renal dialysis—they deserve it—but the people of Gregory, Longreach and Emerald, are wondering, 'Why do we continue to be ignored?' It has gone on for far too long. We have made petitions; we have written. It is about time this government put renal dialysis in Longreach and Emerald.