

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 1679**  
**Asked on 11 November 2008**

MR KNUTH asked the Minister for Health (MR ROBERTSON)-

**QUESTION:**

With reference to a dialysis machine that is sitting idle in the Charters Towers hospital with not enough staff to operate it—

- (1) How many patients have the need for dialysis within the Charters Towers regional council area?
- (2) How many patients have had to relocate to major cities from the Charters Towers regional council area over the last five years because they are unable to be treated at the Charters Towers hospital?
- (3) What plans are in place to provide sufficient staff to operate the dialysis machine in the Charters Towers hospital so that patients are not disadvantaged because of where they live?

**ANSWER:**

- (1) There are a total of five patients from the Charters Towers region requiring renal dialysis. Three patients receive their dialysis through the home therapy program which enables them to remain at home for their treatment. One patient, due to their clinical complexities, requires high level clinical support only available in a large tertiary facility and the other patient has chosen to receive treatment at the Townsville Hospital.
- (2) Staff at the Townsville Hospital Renal Unit are not aware of any Charters Towers renal patients relocating to a major city because they are unable to be treated at Charters Towers Hospital. Renal patients are either supported in the home setting or travel to Townsville for their routine treatments dependant upon clinical need and personal choice.
- (3) The Charters Towers renal facility is a self caring facility accommodating home therapy haemodialysis patients. Clinical staff are not required to operate the dialysis machine located at the hospital, as it is specifically designed for home use. The purpose of having a machine at the hospital, is to maximise access to the haemodialysis machine by more than one patient, if required. However, those patients who choose to have home dialysis therapy are accommodated.