RENAL DIALYSIS SERVICES, KIMBERLEY

224.   Mrs C.A. MARTIN to the Minister for Health:

Will the minister provide an update on renal dialysis services in the Kimberley and the impact these services will have on Aboriginal patients currently undergoing treatment in Perth?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question. I also put on record my appreciation for the amount of work she has done to make sure that this dialysis unit is operating. A key issue is that this unit has been partially funded by Aboriginal communities. It has been built by Aboriginal communities and will be operated by Aboriginal communities for the many Aboriginal people who have spent up to eight years living in a hostel in the city away from their families in the Kimberley.

The services have commenced at a $1.5 million satellite renal dialysis unit in Broome. The unit has been plumbed for 10 renal dialysis units. When this unit is under way, it will take up to 40 patients a week. In addition, two other chairs have been plumbed into the Broome Hospital. We now have 12 chairs operating in the Kimberley. I stress the words "in the Kimberley", because these are Kimberley-provided services and are not just for Broome. Ten Kimberley residents currently receiving dialysis treatment in Perth will be returning home in the near future. Some of them have spent years away from their families. The construction of the unit was jointly funded by the State Government and the Commonwealth Government. As I said to the member for Merredin today, we can work together on these issues; we can speak as one and work towards a single unified health system in this State. The State will fund the operational costs of this unique service.

I pay tribute to the Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley, in particular the Aboriginal Medical Services that have worked so hard with the member for Kimberley to make sure that their people can go home.