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Renal team works to 'close the gap'

FIFTY five patients in one of Australia's most disadvantaged towns had utilised life-saving video technology, Queensland's Health Minister said in Toowoomba yesterday.

Toowoomba Hospital's specialist renal team uses telehealth technology to treat people with chronic kidney disease (CKD) in Cherbourg.

Cherbourg teacher Bevan Costello has used the service to see his specialist for three years.

"Without it I'd have to visit the renal service (in Toowoomba) three times a week," Mr Costello said.

"It's so much easier for us for it to be here.

"We need good care here (in Cherbourg)."

Health Minister Steven Miles said the use of telehealth for CKD treatment had been used in the northern Darling

Downs community since 2011.

"The traditional approach of asking patients to come and see a renal specialist or attend a clinic in Toowoomba wasn't working for a number of cultural and socio-economic reasons," Mr Miles said.

"Many people weren't seeking treatment in the early stages and waited until the disease had severely affected their lives and they needed dialysis.

"By establishing renal specialist outreach clinics via telehealth from Cherbourg, and combining the service with CKD nurse practitioner clinics on the ground, patients are now being seen earlier and more regularly."

Mr Miles said as of 2018, 70 per cent of patients were now seen in the earlier stages of their disease, which provided doctors a better opportunity to slow down its progression.