

Submission to Inquiry into operation and effectiveness of Patient Assisted Transport Schemes (PATS).

I work at a remote health service in South Australia and regularly have patients who need to utilize the Patient Assisted Transport Scheme.

Some of the problems with the scheme include:-

No increase for fuel costs – these have doubled in most areas and the scheme does not allow for this.

No allowance for first night of accommodation unless have pension card – does not allow for patients who do not have ready income and not on health benefit cards.

No allowance for allied health appointments – especially in regard to dental – limited dental services in rural and remote locations. Poor dental health has been shown to greatly increase systemic infections and retard return to health after illness.

The current PATS scheme does not at present cover in many instances even half the fuel costs and many patients are cancelling appointments as they are unable to cope financially until the PATS refund is received or they can not afford to pay the accommodation expense that is required to be able to attend appointments due to the distance travelled.

A more flexible scheme that allows for attending allied health services such as dentist, physiotherapist, chiropractor and podiatrist would greatly assist those in rural and remote areas that need to travel large distances to be able to utilize these services as well as the medical specialists and x-ray services that are covered currently on the scheme.

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