

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing this on behalf of Dean Webster, who cannot actually see well enough, thanks to side effects of the anti-spasmodic and painkilling drugs he is on. He does not qualify for PATS despite living nearby in Newcastle, and not being able to get treatment anywhere in Newcastle or near him on the Central Coast, being based at San Remo. Instead, he has to travel to Sydney. He can barely walk, barely see, and is on morphine. To get to his neurosurgeon, to whom he has been referred by a neurologist here, it takes nearly three hours, then nearly that home - but he can't get PATS, because he is travelling to Prince of Wales Randwick, instead of a closer hospital. PATS is dependent on you going to the CLOSEST hospital. It's true, there is also a neurosurgery ward at Royal North Shore Hospital, though as he's only 39, they're doing a disk replacement, not a disk fusion, and that he can only get at PoW Randwick.

The hospital he's attending is just over 100k's away - the limit to receive PATS help. However, as he could attend Royal North Shore - which is less than 100k's away - he can't get PATS. If he was eligible, PATS would only contribute to his train fare anyway, they won't pay anything towards taxi fares, (and catching the bus is too much for him in his current state) so if he was eligible, all he'd get would be a contribution towards his disability pensioner concession fare of \$2.50. That's IF they would help out, which they won't. He's had to stay overnight several times, because of early morning appointments, and the cheapest accomodation he could find was \$100 a night, of which PATS would pay UP TO around \$32 a night. Though of course , they won't pay him a red cent, because he's not going to a hospital that would turn him into a cripple unable to work for the rest of his life, he's going to a public clinic that gives him a chance at being back in the workforce. He's a public patient, so has had to fight for EIGHT months to get first to a neurologist, then a neurosurgeon, then accepted as a patient at the public clinic for Minimally Invasive Neurosurgery at Prince of Wales. It's bad enough that most of the specialists expect him to pay \$200 plus for an appointment, and won't bulkbill, and Medicare only gives back \$80 or so a time. Health services here have been cut to the bone, thanks to Central Coast Health being absorbed by the North Sydney Health - we have no choice but to travel to the capital, and can't get assistance to do so, even when a person is ALREADY on a Disability Support Pension.

To put it in the vernacular - well, i won't be rude, suffice to say, it's not good enough. Don't get sick in New South Wales, not if you can't afford to make a trip to Sydney.

Thanks for your time

Lisa Barry