

23 May 2007

The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Re: Enquiry into the operation and effectiveness of Patient Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS).

We hereby would like to make the following suggestions for improvements and or considerations in relation to PATS:

- 1 The dealing with different state equivalents in relation to PATS and further regional offices in some instances is cumbersome and does not provide for a good and effective working relationship between accommodation providers and the relevant State bodies processing payments in relation to the scheme.
- 2 The differing rules in different States along with the different amounts of subsidy provided also makes it difficult to develop national accommodation programs for cancer patients and their families. A more uniformed approach would enable easier budgeting.
- 3 There are significant delays in getting paid. Ideally, organisations such as ours providing accommodation would prefer to charge PATS directly as to limit the financial burden on patients during difficult times. However this is sometimes not possible due to significant delays in getting paid which may be attributed to the patient submitting paper work that is needed to forward the payment to the accommodation provider.

It should be considered that on occasion the due diligence of this work is neither at the top of a patient's priority list nor on occasion they will be unable to fulfill the requirements.

- 4 The differing levels of remote kilometres required for the patient to be eligible to receive the scheme is prejudicial to patients who only have to travel a short journey to receive treatment. On occasion even the short travelling journeys can provide significant stress and financial burden to patients given that certain treatments may be required for certain types of cancer that may not be able to be administered or provided at the hospital closest to the patient's residence even if they live in a metropolitan area.

We believe the scheme should be available to all patients who require housing in close proximity to hospital of treatment.

Should you have any further queries in relations to our submission, the undersigned is best contacted on 08 8235 7000.

Yours Faithfully

Troy Manhire MFIA
Executive Chairman