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

25 May 2007.

RE: Inquiry into Operation & Effectiveness of Patient Assisted Travel Schemes (PATS)

Dear Sir/madam

In Western Australia people living with Motor Neurone Disease (PLWMND) who live outside the metro area face many hurdles when they are required to travel to medical and related allied health appointments because the PATS system fails them.

PLWMND can have a rapid response to the disease which leaves them incapable of movement as their muscles no longer work. They often need to travel to specialist services like the sleep clinic or for electric wheelchair modifications in the city which are not available elsewhere. PLWMND need to be in their wheelchairs for any fitting of assistive equipment due to the nature of their disability. Accordingly they need to be transported in suitable vehicles. The cost even with help from PATS can be very expensive if they can get access to proper transport. Many of our clients are not able to utilise services as disabled transport from HACC providers is not available. This means that they are required to get a disabled taxi at their own expense, if they can get one, which for many travelling to the city can be as high as \$300 from the Peel region for example.

Some service providers cannot travel outside of their own particular regions. There needs to be flexible options for transporting wheelchair bound patients to and from country regions as PLWMND have no other options like public transport.

Accommodation services for PLWMND also need to be fully accessible and provision of suitable lifting equipment like hoists etc. needs to be in place.

I strongly suggest that the committee take into account the special needs of PLWMND in relation to PATS anomalies because the current system is failing many families in our State. Representatives from our organisation would be happy to provide further information at any public hearing if requested to do so by the enquiry.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Benson-Lidholm', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jim Benson-Lidholm
State Manager MNDWA Inc.