

# MURWEH SHIRE COUNCIL

95-101 Alfred Street, Charleville  
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23 May 2007

YOUR REF:

IN REPLY CONTACT: Chris Blanch

RESPONDS TO:

OUR REF: CDB:jhu/:

The Senate Committee  
Patient Assisted Travel Schemes  
Parliament House  
**CANBERRA ACT 2600**

community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senators

**Subject: Review of Patient Assisted Travel Scheme**

I am the Chief Executive Officer of Murweh Shire headquartered in Charleville, Queensland. I have worked in Western Queensland local government for over twenty years. Charleville is a regional centre and our hospital services adjoining Shires of Quilpie, Thargomindah (Bulloo) and Cunnamulla (Paroo) which is a vast area of South Western Queensland.

I don't have any expertise in health or health service delivery but in recent times I have become aware of residents with serious health problems and quite frankly have been appalled by the administration of assisted travel in our region. I would like to acquaint you with two residents of our Shire who are being treated for very serious illness. Both have given permission to have their names and telephone numbers included in this submission and would gladly provide further information and documents on their experiences with the travel subsidy.

1. Mr Roy Bignell, Charleville

Roy has been undergoing treatment for cancer in Brisbane which is nearly 800km from Charleville. Despite the seriousness of his illness, the effects of his treatment and recommendations of his doctors, he has had to continually fight to be given air vouchers to get to his destination.

The alternative is a 14 hour one way bus ticket which would be torture for anyone undergoing this type of treatment. It is disgraceful that an Australian citizen who has worked all his

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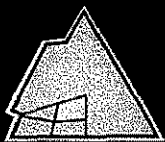
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life and continues to work is made suffer the additional stress of fighting health administrators for air tickets even though they are recommended by his doctor.

2. Mrs Kelli Radnedge, Charleville

Kelli is being treated in Brisbane for a serious tumour. She has documents showing her doctor advising against her travelling by road to Brisbane, she should fly. This was overruled by health bureaucrats who offered her a bus ticket. She has given up on the system and now pays for her own airfares.

Both of these people are provided with the \$30.00 accommodation voucher which doesn't go very far in an expensive city like Brisbane.

Both feel humiliated by the treatment they receive by administrators. It seems to them that they are perceived as going on a holiday not the reality of being treated for very grave illnesses.

I believe that a better service would be provided to the residents of our region if two seats were permanently booked on the daily QANTAS flight and kept for patients requiring ongoing treatment in Brisbane. Accommodation in the form of two rooms permanently booked in Brisbane would also be of more value than the \$30.00 voucher.

We have a lot of health bureaucrats in our area administering various health programmes, some of which are funded by the Federal Government. I think these programmes are operated under the guise of preventative health. This is all very well but surely our first priority must be to provide as much support to people who are ill before consideration is given to funding other health services.

Yours faithfully



MR CHRIS BLANCH PSM MLGMA  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER