

HEALTH, PATIENT ASSISTED TRAVEL SCHEME

1583. Mr Masters to the Minister for Health

- (1) Following the Minister's announcement on 11 February 2002 regarding Patients Assistance Travel Scheme (PATS) subsidies now being available to residents of the Peel region, will the Minister extend PATS assistance to residents in the western part of the Vasse electorate (Dunsborough and Yallingup), who are forced to travel the same 70 to 90 kilometre distances to the South West Health Campus for many specialist services and treatments as Peel residents must travel to Perth?
- (2) If the PATS subsidy is not to be extended to residents of Dunsborough and nearby areas, is this because they live in a safe non-Labor seat as opposed to Peel residents, many of whom live in a marginal Labor-held seat?
- (3) Is it not true that the previous government's decision to withdraw PATS funding from Peel only occurred after a major upgrade to the hospitals in the area and the provision of substantial funding to the Red Cross to transport patients to and from Perth hospitals, when local hospitals could not provide the required services?
- (4) When will the review of PATS be completed?
- (5) Is it intended that additional PATS funding to be provided as a result of the review's recommendations and ALP election promises will be deferred until the start of the 2002/2003 financial year so as to reduce the overall cost of PATS for the current financial year?

Mr KUCERA replied:

1. PATS has been extended to those Peel residents living between 70 and 100kms from Perth who are most in need. That is people with a chronic condition (eg cancer) and needing to make frequent trips to a specialist, who are unable to access the volunteer transport scheme, and those concession card holders requiring urgent treatment who are unable to get an appointment locally.
2. Not applicable.
3. PATS is only provided to Peel residents in cases where local specialist services are not available and patients are unable to utilise the volunteer patient travel service.
4. The Report into the PATS Review has been released and the revised scheme will be introduced on 1 July 2002.
5. No. An additional \$1 million for PATS was allocated to country health services for the 2001/2 financial year, as per the election promise.