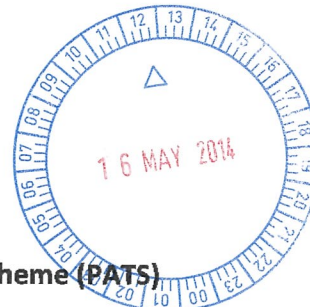




1 May 2014

Hon Terry Redman MLA
Minister for Regional Development; Lands; Minister Assisting the Minister for State
Development; Leader of the National Party of Australia (WA)
PO Box 327
Denmark WA 6333

Dear Mr Redman



Request for Community Feedback - Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATS)

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the current Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATS). Council has an enthusiastic and active Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee (AIC) who are very eager to take this opportunity and share the experiences and challenges of living and ageing in a rural community with limited support from PATS.

Bridgetown is fortunate to have 8 General Medical Practitioners living and working in the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes. The local doctors practise out of the Bridgetown Medical Centre and Bridgetown Hospital, however, many residents must travel to regional centres for specialist medical treatment. Bunbury, being the regional centre, is the most common destination for specialist medical treatment. AIC members report a number of issues associated with travel to and from Bunbury for residents of the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes in relation to accessing specialist medical treatment.

One of the major concerns is the eligibility requirement of PATS for patients to be 100km from the nearest eligible medical specialist service, including a Telehealth service. For Bridgetown residents, due to the location of the Post Office (as the measurable point of distance) there is a 3km shortfall in eligibility. The distance between the Bridgetown and Bunbury Post Offices is 97km. The result is that Bridgetown residents receive **no** assistance for travel to medical appointments in Bunbury.

Although residents of the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes can receive PATS for travel to specialist medical appointments located in Busselton, it is Bunbury that is the regional centre where the majority of specialist medical practitioners are located. AIC members report that many community members are of the view that the lack of proportionate travel assistance (amount graduated based on distance travelled) creates great difficulties for residents and is perceived as inequitable. The return trip to Bunbury is still 194km from Post Office to Post Office.

This inequity is exacerbated by the lack of adequate or affordable public transport to and from Bunbury. The existing public transport (bus), from Bridgetown to Bunbury for medical

appointments can prove difficult as the bus routes are not directly connected to hospitals and specialist centres. In addition, the timetable changes daily and can prove expensive and inflexible for the patient. Once in Bunbury, seniors and people with disability (those effected by ineligibility to PATS) need to make their own way to appointments via taxi and inter-Bunbury bus service. The public transport service times are limited, it is difficult to co-ordinate with specialist appointments and the length of travel time and waiting is often difficult for patients to cope with, especially those who have undergone a procedure or those who are frail. I have attached documentation with further information regarding transport costs and time tables.

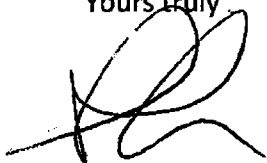
The Fuel Card is available to some residents but cannot be used to access public transport, the local taxi does not accept the fuel card and neither will Silver Chain, therefore, unless a patient has a private car the fuel card is of minimal assistance. For patients that are able to find someone to drive them to and from appointments in Bunbury issues of public liability for the driver and vehicle can arise. Seniors and people with disability also report concerns regarding feelings of indebtedness to the driver if the patient requires regular care and a sense that a friend is not a permanent solution to rural and regional transport problems.

Seniors and people with disability report that the administration of PATS can be complicated for eligible users of the scheme. Forms need to be presented and signed by the referring doctor prior to travel and this may require the organization and expense of a second visit to the doctor once the specialist appointment details have been finalized before the patient can attend the specialist appointment.

The concerns outlined above impact greatly on the senior population in the Shire, it is difficult for many senior community members to embrace the concept of "ageing in place", which is often promoted by state and federal government, without receiving the support required to do so.

I hope the information included in this letter will assist in the review and development of PATS.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tim Clynch', written over the words 'Yours truly'.

Tim Clynch
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

CC Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee Members
ENC

BRIDGETOWN-BUNBURY SERVICE

From	To	Depart	Arrive	When	Cost one-way (Sen/Pen)
South West Coachlines					
Bridgetown	Bunbury	7.10 am	8.35 am	Mon-Fri	12.60
Bunbury	Bridgetown	4.20 pm	5.50 pm	Mon-Fri	12.60
Transwa					
Bridgetown	Bunbury	12.47 pm	2.00 pm	Daily	8.25
Bunbury	Bridgetown	12.00 pm	1.17 pm	Daily	8.25
Bridgetown	Bunbury	8.55 am	11.00 am	Tue & Thu	8.25
Bunbury	Bridgetown	3.15 pm	5.20 pm	Mon & Wed	8.25
Bridgetown	Bunbury	9.40 am	10.55 am	Monday	8.25
Bunbury	Bridgetown	5.30 pm	6.47 pm	Sunday	8.25