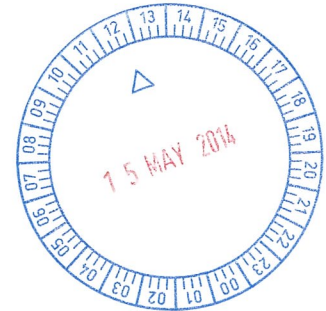




# JOSIE FARRER MLA

## Member for Kimberley

15 May 2014



Hon Liz Behjat MLC  
Chairman  
Standing Committee on Public Administration  
Parliament House  
Harvest Terrace  
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Chair

### **Re. Patient Assisted Travel Scheme Submission to the Standing Committee on Public Administration**

I welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry into the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS). As the Member for the Kimberley I have had the opportunity to hear from constituents firsthand about the issues they have encountered with PATS. Currently, PATS escort subsidies do not take into consideration the increasing cost of living pressures that Kimberley constituents face when accessing health care outside of their community.

While constituents are grateful for the subsidies provided through PATS they find they are not acceptable given the rising cost of services. Those who are eligible for a taxi voucher find that it barely covers the costs of a return trip from the airport to their accommodation, leaving them out of pocket before they attend their medical appointments. These costs pile up as it is often hard to organise appointments back to back.

Similarly the fuel subsidies offered are not in line with the rising cost of fuel in regional areas. The current subsidy of 16 cents per litre of fuel for a patient driving over 100 kilometres one way, is not acceptable or realistic given the average fuel prices in the Kimberley sit around \$2.00 a litre. Given the current fuel prices in the Kimberley this subsidy is extremely inadequate as it covers less than 10 per cent of fuel costs per litre.

Constituents have found that accommodation costs are also substandard. Often hostel accommodation in Perth and regional areas is regularly stretched resulting in constituents having to find alternative accommodation usually in hotels. Hotels are costly and are at least 2-3 times more than what patients receive from the PATS subsidy. One Kimberley constituent has reported that she has previously paid \$250 a night to stay in a hotel store room on a roll away bed with no bathroom or toilet as there was no other accommodation available that night.



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Constituents have also expressed dissatisfaction with the current PATS administration process. They have found that the office is unsympathetic to the difficulties involved with having a disability or severe health issue and accessing health services outside of their area. Many patients are frustrated and constantly feel like they are being interrogated. One constituent for example said that her interactions with the PATS office made her constantly 'feel so disabled and inadequate' and cancelled her last appointment to Perth as she felt it was too difficult to deal with the PATS office.

Currently PATS does not take into account that many Kimberley patients first language is one other than English. This issue can result in poorer health outcomes as patients are unable to communicate with medical practitioners adequately. This could be overcome by amending requirements for patient escort eligibility to account for patients for whom English is not their first language. This is currently not included but would be a worthy amendment that could help overcome poorer health outcomes.

I believe that through amending the requirements for escort eligibility and increasing the PATS subsidies, Kimberley residents will be less out of pocket and become more comfortable in accessing health care outside of their community.

Kind Regards,

Josie Farrer MLA  
Member for Kimberley