



12 May 2014  
ACPS/SUBMISSIONS



Ms L Mesiti  
Committee Clerk  
Standing Committee on Public Administration  
Legislative Council, Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Ms Mesiti

**Inquiry in the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS)  
Standing Committee on Public Administration  
Legislative Council Western Australia**

The Australasian College of Podiatric Surgeons (ACPS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to comment on the above inquiry.

The ACPS requests the inclusion of Podiatric Surgeons within the eligibility criteria for PATS funding.

The ACPS recognises the importance of PATS in funding travel arrangements and assisting in costs associated with people accessing required medical and surgical care in rural settings. The ACPS makes the following comment in relation to the terms of reference in 1(b): eligibility for PATS funding.

Under the current Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) eligibility criteria 2.2 includes:

- An eligible medical specialist service is either:
  - a) A medical practitioner who is recognised as a specialist for Medicare Benefits purposes (with the exception of pathology and/or pharmacology)

As Podiatric Surgeons are recognised as specialists surgeons they should be included in the above PATS eligibility criteria.

As a background, in 2010 and under National Law the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Authority (AHPRA) via the Podiatry Board of Australia received Ministerial Council approval for the specialist registration of podiatric surgery. Therefore, AHPRA recognises podiatric surgery as a surgical specialty. The ACPS considers the current eligibility criteria as inadequate for patients whom require treatment from a podiatric surgeon. Please find enclosed as Appendix 1, a defined scope of practice for podiatric surgery.

Podiatric surgeons frequently consult rural patients referred by general practitioners and medical specialists . This cohort of patients, are currently unable to receive PATS for assistance in travel expenses. Within Western Australia, there are 10 practicing podiatric surgeons, two of which are based within rural settings (Bunbury and Geraldton). The other eight are based within Perth.

The PATS scheme is an important mechanism which provides assistance to patients within rural settings. Changes associated with National Law such as specialty recognition of podiatric surgery require eligibility criteria for PATS funding to be altered appropriately. Such alternation in PATS funding will meet the needs of the WA public.

The ACPS looks forward to the inclusion of Podiatric Surgery within PATS eligibility criteria and is available to assist the inquiry if required.

Please contact the College Assistant Secretary should any further information be required.

Kindest regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Herman', with a stylized, flowing script.

Dr Rob Herman  
President

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Podiatry Board of Australia**

#### **Scope of Practice:**

Podiatric surgeons may be granted specialist registration with the Podiatry Board of Australia, after completing extensive specialised postgraduate training and education in podiatric medicine and surgery. Podiatric surgeons are competent in the diagnosis and treatment of disease, injuries and defects of the human foot and related structures, and use surgical and non-surgical processes to care for bone, joint and soft tissue pathology. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- ☐ Structural deformities, including bunions, hammertoes, painful flat foot and high arch deformity, bone spurs
- ☐ Heel pain;
- ☐ Nerve entrapments;
- ☐ Degeneration and arthrosis of joints'
- ☐ Skin and nail conditions;
- ☐ Congenital deformities; and
- ☐ Trauma-related injuries, including fractures and dislocations.

A key role for podiatric surgeons is contributing to safe, effective and cost-efficient clinical care within multi-disciplinary healthcare teams involving general practitioners, specialists and other health professionals, with appropriate referrals undertaken to support improved quality, safety and healthcare standards and practice.