

PATIENT ASSISTED TRAVEL SCHEME

**577. Ms M. BEARD to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the current petition led by the opposition that calls for real increases to the patient assisted travel scheme.

- (1) Why, at a time of record surpluses, do regional WA patients receive an unfair fuel subsidy of only 16¢, when other states and territories receive more?
- (2) Why is it good enough for New South Wales patients to receive 40¢ a kilometre but not regional WA families?

**Ms A. SANDERSON replied:**

- (1)–(2) It is always interesting to get these questions from the Nationals WA, to be honest. I appreciate that the current member for North West Central was not present and was not a member of this place when the National Party and Liberal Party were in government. I was part of the Standing Committee on Public Administration, which had a Liberal–National majority, a Liberal Party chair and a senior Nationals member in Hon Jackie Boydell.

We travelled around and did an inquiry into the patient assisted travel scheme and found that it was not adequate and did not meet the requirements of regional people. We found that it should be increased and certain processes and arrangements could be improved and so on and so forth. The Liberal government ignored the recommendations. It ignored the recommendations so much so that I remember my Legislative Council colleagues, Liberal and National, stood and were furious with their own government for completely ignoring the recommendations. The only thing the Nationals WA did for PATS was to put its logo on the form. The only thing the National Party ever did for the scheme was to stamp royalties for regions and the Nationals logo on the form. That is all it did in government. This government increased it under the Premier as Minister for Health. This government has made significant increases to PATS for regional people. It is very difficult to stomach a question that is, quite frankly, so hypocritical when it is only this government that has invested in PATS and regional health care above and beyond what opposition members did when they were in government.