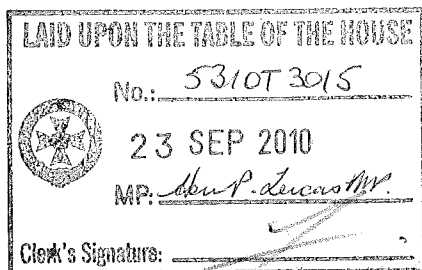




Hon Paul Lucas MP

MI169412

MO: 10001514



**Queensland
Government**

**Deputy Premier
and Minister for Health**

21 SEP 2010

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Service
Parliament House
Corner Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I write in response to your letter, regarding Petition Number 1361-09. The Petition requests an increase to the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme (PTSS) accommodation allowance.

I also refer to previous responses to this issue which have been tabled in the house.

I appreciate the concerns that Pink in the Tropics and Mr Jason O'Brien MP, Member for Cook, have raised and am aware of the difficulties that many Queenslanders face in accessing health services. I also recognise that the provision of high quality, safe and sustainable health services is a challenge in many small and remote communities.

The PTSS provides a subsidy towards travel and accommodation costs to enable patients, and in some cases their carers, to access specialist medical services that are not available within 50 kilometres of their nearest public hospital. The PTSS is not intended to cover all costs. As specialist medical services cannot be provided at every location in the State, Queensland Health is committed to delivering high quality, safe and sustainable health care by developing a minimum range of health services for small and remote communities, more flexible workforce options such as rural generalists and rural and isolated practice nurses and better use of technologies.

I am advised that Queensland Health has spent \$30.8 million, \$34.8 million, \$41.1 million on the PTSS for the 2006-2007, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 financial years respectively, representing growth of 33.5% over that period. Between the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 financial years, PTSS expenditure increased by 18%. I am further advised that Queensland Health spent more on PTSS than any other State or Territory.

Since July 2007, the PTSS provides both public and private eligible patients with:

- commercial travel (air, train and bus) on the most clinically appropriate and cost effective mode of transport;
- a fuel subsidy rate of 15 cents per kilometre for patients who choose to travel by private car; and
- a subsidy of \$30 per person per night, for the patient and their approved escort if they stay in commercial accommodation and if the patient and their escort choose to stay with friends or relatives the reimbursement is \$10 per person per night.

Level 19 State Health Building
147-163 Charlotte Street Brisbane 4000
GPO Box 48 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3234 1191
Facsimile +61 7 3229 4731
Email deputypremier@ministerial.qld.gov.au
ABN 65 959 415 158

The PTSS claims reimbursement process is administered locally by individual Health Service Districts and is currently under review with focus on the administrative processes and application forms, making them more user friendly and improving the reimbursement times.

The Queensland Government is aiming to further improve this investment by developing sustainable and cost-effective initiatives to assist rural and remote patients in accessing specialist medical services.

One initiative is the provision of appropriate and affordable patient accommodation for patients travelling to access health services. The Queensland Government has committed \$15 million in grants over three years for non-government organisations to build or enhance accommodation for patients travelling to receive treatment for cancer, heart disease and other illnesses. This is intended to further support those patients who are required to travel for specialist medical services. Capital funding applications are currently being assessed for accommodation in Cairns (Cancer Council Queensland and Australian Red Cross) and Townsville (Leukaemia Foundation and Yumba Meta Housing Association).

Furthermore, the Liz Plummer Cancer Care Centre, to be located opposite the Cairns Base Hospital, will be a first for Cairns and will mean around 340 patients a year will no longer have to travel to Townsville or Brisbane for their radiation therapy, allowing patients to have their treatment closer to home.

The introduction of TeleOncology to the Cairns Base Hospital will also reduce the burden of travelling for cancer patients in the Cairns and Hinterland Health Service District by delivering clinical oncology services to aid in their diagnosis, treatment and follow-up care.

Queensland Health has also committed to review the PTSS accommodation subsidy rate for longer stay patients such as cancer patients. The relevant area in Queensland Health has commenced this review.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Ms Jane Carlisle, Acting Director, Integrated Patient Transport Unit, Queensland Health, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone 3328 9063.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Lucas', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

PAUL LUCAS MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Health