

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

INQUIRY INTO THE PATIENT ASSISTED TRAVEL SCHEME

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PORT HEDLAND
MONDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2014**

SESSION ONE

Members

Hon Liz Behjat (Chairman)
Hon Darren West (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Nigel Hallett
Hon Jacqui Boydell
Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson

Hearing commenced at 10.44 am**Mrs SHARON BOGGETTI****Inland Operations Manager, WA Country Health Service, Pilbara, sworn and examined:**

The CHAIRMAN: Hi. I am Liz Behjat, the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Public Administration, and thank you very much for doing this. This is a bit of a novel experience for us. You are probably quite familiar with this whole thing; we are not—we are newbies at it—so please bear with us. If I can just introduce the others who are with us today, starting from here on my right with Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson, who represents the East Metropolitan Region; the Deputy Chair of the committee, Hon Darren West, from the Agricultural Region; Hon Jacqui Boydell, representing the Mining and Pastoral Region; and I represent the North Metropolitan Region. One of our members is not with us today, Hon Nigel Hallett, who represents the South West Region. We also have Felicity Mackie, our advisory officer; our committee clerk; and Hansard, who is reporting the proceedings.

I need to swear you in as a witness. Normally we would have the oath or the affirmation to give you here and you would read it, but you do not have that, so perhaps if I could just say the words and then you could repeat them after me.

[Witness took the affirmation.]

The CHAIRMAN: Sharon, this is the formal part, and then we will have a very relaxed chat. You will have signed a document entitled “Information for Witnesses”. Have you read and understood that document?

Mrs Boggetti: I have.

The CHAIRMAN: These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard, and a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. To assist the committee and Hansard, could you please quote the full title of any document you refer to during the course of this hearing for the record. I remind you that your transcript will become a matter for the public record. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today’s proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session. We do not have any of the general public or media in attendance with us here. I do not know if you have there, but, if not, we can dispense with that part of it. Please note that until such time as the transcript of your public evidence is finalised, it should not be made public. I advise you that publication or disclosure of the uncorrected transcript of evidence may constitute a contempt of Parliament and may mean that the material published or disclosed is not subject to parliamentary privilege.

That is the formal bit out of the way. How we have been running through these meetings that we have been having with people is that I am just starting off with a range of questions, and then other members are asking questions supplementary to those. The first question we are asking everyone is if you could just describe to us in your opinion what are the efficiencies and what are the deficiencies of the PAT scheme?

Mrs Boggetti: I think the fact that we have a PAT scheme in and of itself is efficient. I believe that enabling people to access specialists that are not available to them locally is an efficiency. I think the inefficiencies are the difficulties we have in managing this system within our resources and across such a broad region. You know, the Pilbara is enormous, and most of the people have to access specialists in Perth, which is a burden—a burden for organisations and a burden in cost. A large proportion of the people who live up here speak very little English, have difficulty negotiating systems of any kind, and then having to send people to Perth in and of itself can make

things very difficult. So some of the inefficiencies are around we can get people down, but sometimes it is very difficult to get people home and to get them in the state, say, between Perth and Cotton Creek, there are a lot of stops along the way, and for people who are unfamiliar with cities, planes and have other cultural issues to contend with, that can be very difficult.

[10.50 am]

The CHAIRMAN: Your clients who do not have English as their first language, do they get sent to Perth with a carer that can help them through that whole maze?

Mrs Boggetti: I do not manage or administer the PAT system, but I send people in there and we do send people when it is identified and when it is requested within the application. I also know that there are people whom I have met at the airport who have come back and who have not come back with an escort, and they are sometimes the people I would be concerned for.

The CHAIRMAN: How is the PAT scheme advertised and promoted to the people in your region?

Mrs Boggetti: I am not clear because I do not manage the PATS; it is a centralised system in the Pilbara and so that would be Brian and Loreen Wilson, who I am sure you have met, who would promote that. Having said that, I have a district health advisory committee—it is fairly new—but we have had a lot of conversations in that space around PATS, and we do undertake community consultation and awareness so we promote what we know about PATS and we gather feedback from people so that we can promote that back up the food chain, if you like, to our local PATS office. I know that Loreen has actually come to Newman and done some education and training with the local general practice around how PATS works because it has ultimately doctors who are filling in the forms. But other than that, I do not feel qualified to comment on how it is promoted.

The CHAIRMAN: One of the things we have talked about in the regions that we visited is that perhaps, given that this is the twenty-first century, it might be more suitable to have a computerised system of PATS where a form would be generated as soon as the GP is making that initial determination. You could have self-populating forms and that would then get around the issues that we found about doctors sometimes not filling in why people need to have air travel or taxi vouchers and things like that. Do you think that would be the way to go with this system in the future?

Mrs Boggetti: It would be marvellous if possible for GPs who have most other of their applications online, so I think if they were able to simply auto populate, that would be marvellous. And as a paid consumer, having been a consumer of PATS myself, I think, if it had a browser function so that when you are uploading your application from home, you could click on a browser link and it would be truly an online system. We still have to fax things through to a centralised pay centre. We have a rule here that you need to provide your actual date of appointment letter to the PATS office to get approved, so to be able to scan it into your own computer and upload that through a browser link would be fantastic.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Sharon, can I ask a question relating to escorts?

Mrs Boggetti: Yes.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: In other areas we have heard in our public hearings that people definitely have an escort approved for clinical purposes but not necessarily for cultural purposes or where people have English as a second language. Do you think in your experience that is what you have seen, or are you suggesting that in the Pilbara people are receiving escorts to Perth for cultural reasons?

Mrs Boggetti: Do you know, I am not sure, yet, I have to be honest, because I do not administer a PAT program, hopefully, as you might have had in the Kimberley, I will make those determinations. I was under the opinion that, in some instances, people have been provided an escort where it was felt that they are from a remote Aboriginal settlement and that they needed an escort, then that would be provided, but I have no proof of that.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: Sharon, I think that is all the questions that we have for you this morning, thank you.

Mrs Boggetti: Wonderful. I assume other people have got loads of questions for me.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have anything else that you think might be useful to us as information from Newman?

Mrs Boggetti: I am sure you know that we are about to do a trial of a new form. I am sure you have seen it and all I can say is I am really looking forward to that.

The CHAIRMAN: Sorry; I missed that—a trial of?

Mrs Boggetti: A new form. Have you been told about that?

The CHAIRMAN: No. There is something you can tell us about.

Mrs Boggetti: For my sins and complaining about PATS as a client, I am the Pilbara representative on a working party which is addressing some of the OAG outcomes. It then links up with the wheatbelt region and one of our main consumer feedback gripes is not only the design of the form, but the fact that there are blue forms and yellow forms and, you know, a plethora of forms. So we have come together and we have designed a one-size-fits-all form, which has the doctor section, the patient section, the specialist section. It has an attached information sheet that talks about the trial, about the PATS, how to fill the form in—it looks like a chart, and it is together so when you get the form you get your information at the same time. We are about to trial on 22 September using the one-size-fits-all form, and we will see if it is as efficient as we would like to believe that it is going to be. One of my problems last year—I am an executive manager—was that I could not fill the form in, I had to get some assistance!

The CHAIRMAN: That trial is going to be statewide?

Mrs Boggetti: No; it is in two regions, the wheatbelt and the Pilbara, and we will trial it. Look, there are anomalies, because until you actually use the form, you do not really know if it is as user-friendly as you think it is. We have run it through our DPACS and through the northern and southern governing councils, so we are now ready to try it on real people. In December we will have had some feedback from doctors and users and then we will see. Then we can tweak it. Once we have an ideal form, we will be able to go statewide.

The CHAIRMAN: Should Brian be able to provide us with an example of that form today when we ask him later on?

Mrs Boggetti: Absolutely; I sent him a box of 2 000 last week.

The CHAIRMAN: We can relieve him of a couple of those then so we can take those with us as well. I think I was a bit surprised, “Oh, really!” This is our first trip into either the Pilbara or the wheatbelt so that is why we did not know about the new form being trialled.

Sharon, thank you very much for providing us with that information and for your time today; we do appreciate it.

Mrs Boggetti: You are welcome.

Hearing concluded at 10:58 am
