

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

INQUIRY INTO THE PATIENT ASSISTED TRAVEL SCHEME

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT CARNARVON
FRIDAY, 29 AUGUST 2014**

SESSION THREE

Members

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

Hearing commenced at 2.13 pm**Miss ELIZABETH HARROLD****Assistant in Nursing, sworn and examined:****The CHAIRMAN:** I have to ask you to take either the oath or the affirmation.

[Witness took the affirmation.]

The CHAIRMAN: Could you please state the capacity in which you are appearing in front of us today.**Miss Harrold:** I am here on behalf of my auntie, Paula Pugh Schipp. She has just typed up a short submission, and it basically says how important PATS is to her.**The CHAIRMAN:** Are you her carer?**Miss Harrold:** I am a live-in carer, but she has a husband who is a carer as well.**The CHAIRMAN:** You will have signed the document titled “Information for Witnesses”. Have you read and understood that document?**Miss Harrold:** Yes.**The CHAIRMAN:** These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. To assist the committee and Hansard, please quote the full title of any document—your document will not have a title—you refer to during the course of this hearing, and please be aware of the microphone and try to speak into it. 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. If the committee grants your request any public or media in attendance will be excluded from the hearing. 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.

You are going to read a statement from your aunty. Is she happy for you to be doing that in a public forum?

Miss Harrold: Yes.**The CHAIRMAN:** Okay. Then the floor is yours, Lizzie. Go for it.**Miss Harrold:** PATS is a lifesaving facility for the people of Carnarvon, indeed for all country patients, who are so grossly disenfranchised through geographical isolation. It is one of those things you may not realise until it happens to you. My husband and I have to travel to Perth every first and second Tuesday to be given a half-hour chemotherapy treatment, then return to Carnarvon each Wednesday. I am far too weak to make the journey alone. Can you imagine feeling violently ill, yet willing to go through this truly harrowing two-day experience simply because there is no alternative if you want to stay alive? All of us have worked all of our lives paying taxes in the hope and belief that if we ever needed help in return it would be forthcoming. When I was first diagnosed with cancer my husband gave up work to be my full-time carer for what time I have left, so we are living on our savings. Over 100 people in Carnarvon are facing this, as we speak, needing to travel to Geraldton or Perth, none of whom could possibly hope to self-fund this medical issue. I am just one voice amongst many.**The CHAIRMAN:** Right; so how long has you aunty been doing this for now?

Miss Harrold: She actually went out to Perth in January this year, when she was first diagnosed. She was there for about four months. Since she has been back, she has been going back and forth, so quite a few months now.

The CHAIRMAN: Does she fly there and back each time?

Miss Harrold: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: With your uncle?

Miss Harrold: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: So, both of them, and there are no issues there of them both having return airfares or anything like that?

Miss Harrold: No, they are very good with that.

The CHAIRMAN: And they go to Perth, not Geraldton, is that right?

Miss Harrold: They go to Perth, yes.

The CHAIRMAN: They go to Perth. Right.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: I think that is a very heartfelt statement, and I thank you for coming in.

Miss Harrold: She just wanted to put across how important it is to her.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: I know Paula, and I know how important that has been to her, so thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: It is really difficult for us to really ask you questions about that, because that is her statement, but she has got that on the record.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: She feels she is pretty well recompensed?

Miss Harrold: Yes, there are hardly any issues, really; not that I am aware of. I think she is just passionate about the service that is provided, because if it was not there —

The CHAIRMAN: I think when people see that there is an inquiry underway, sometimes by members of Parliament, they think that for some reason we have been tasked with the duty of shutting something down. I can reassure you, your aunty and anyone in the room today that that is not the purpose of this committee. We understand the value of it. As I have said, we are from the government and we are here to help you. It is true, so please take back to your aunt our appreciation for her voicing the benefits that she is getting from the scheme. That is the message we are getting across Western Australia—that it is a fabulous scheme. There is certainly no intention on the part of any person sitting in front of you today, or of anyone I have come in contact with in my time in Parliament, that they want to see the end of the scheme. That is not the purpose of this at all.

Miss Harrold: That is fabulous.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: We are trying to make it better.

The CHAIRMAN: We want to make it better and more efficient, and accessible to more people, perhaps. Thanks, Lizzie, we really appreciate it.

Miss Harrold: Thank you.

Hearing concluded at 2.18 pm
