

Public Administration Committee

From: Kate Johnston <KJohnston@westarthur.wa.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 8 May 2014 1:48 PM
To: Public Administration Committee
Cc: bwittber@wsquared.com.au
Subject: Attention Lauren Mesiti Parliamentary Enquiry- PATS
Attachments: Feedback re PATS May 2014.docx

Dear Lauren

Please find a submission from the Shire of West Arthur on the Patients Assisted Travel Scheme.

If you require further information or would like to discuss this submission, please do not hesitate to contact Nicole Wasmann CEO or me on the number listed below.

Regards

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Feedback from the Age-Friendly Communities report from the 4WD (six Wheatbelt shires) conducted in 2010 indicated the following concerns regarding PATS:

- Difficulty in completing the forms (both understanding the requirements and getting the right forms signed in time)
- Difficulty in accessing a GP to get the forms signed in time
- Having to travel to get the forms signed and submitted in time
- Not being able to access PATS to see a specific specialist especially if referred to one when that specialist came to the closest regional centre but since has moved to another centre. Patients wanted continuity of care rather than changing to another visiting specialist
- Long waiting times for some regional visiting specialists but not eligible for PATS if referred to another specialist in another centre.
- If attending an appointment in Perth for example it necessitates an overnight stay for many people and if they are needing help to get to appointments, their carers/family. The cost of accommodation in Perth is very high making it a very expensive journey to a specialist appointment. Consideration for additional funds for overnight stays.

Subsequent feedback to the Shire of West Arthur:

- If a patient has an ongoing condition that will require lifelong review from a specialist there should be an easy way to complete the approval process to cut down on the red tape. Having to go to a GP to get approval seems an additional cost if the visit is not needed for anything else. Each visit to the GP not only costs money but also time and travel costs.
- Unwieldy getting forms completed in time especially if you are unaware of the need to do so until the last minute.
- The desire to have continued care with a particular specialist or to be able to choose the specialist you want to see and still be eligible for PATS was reiterated.
- The arbitrary nature of the number of kilometres to the nearest specialist to be eligible for PATS means that some people miss out on assistance and yet still need help to get to appointments. One person said that they were 2 kms inside the approved distance and so were not eligible. There may need to be clarification about eligibility criteria.
- Lack of information about PATS and difficulty understanding if you are eligible, what is covered, how to access it. Even the medical personnel seem confused in some areas.

Below are emailed extracts from PATS users:

1. Our experience with Patient Assist Travel scheme has been successful overall. It was a bit tiresome getting it set up, having to go to Narrogin to get a doctors approval then to the hospital to register. It seems you have to be more than a 100 km from either

Perth or Bunbury or you're not eligible. I have enquired in Collie about forms but they knew nothing about it at that time.

I'm not sure of percent return but it certainly helps with the cost of travel. Also when my wife had to go to Perth for radiation we were able to stay at Crawford Lodge for five weeks and Pats paid the initial account. We also showed our appreciation with a donation but it is comforting to know there is a backstop.

It is still necessary to reregister periodically if your complaint is ongoing or if you are smitten with a different ailment that requires travel to and from a specialist. Another point if there is more than one person having treatment then both have to register!

2. Our experience with PATS was frustrating. In the first place we never had instructions on how to use the service. We picked a few tips up from people who had used it, but if any leaflets were issued we never saw them.

My husband was told he could not be paid if he saw his regular heart specialist in Perth, he was disappointed in that, and decided after a couple more mess ups re the forms, he would not bother with it any more. I am hoping to get some clear instruction on how to use it, as basically it is a very helpful idea.

3. I think PATS is a fantastic idea **but**
 - Why can't I have the option to fill the form in online and upload payment receipts from my Specialists? The receipts are proof that I attended my appointment.
 - Why do I have to make and pay for an appointment with my GP just so he can fill in the application forms, when he writes almost exactly what I write on page 1 of the application form.
 - The time it takes to process the original application, then another appointment and payment with the specialist for them to sign the Specialist certificate.
 - The form states to send the application prior to your appointment, recently I was at the Breast surgeon and because being a country person he sent me that afternoon to have a CT scan and a Bone scan, how was I meant to send my application forms in prior to these appointments.
 - I have only just started my PATS process since being diagnosed with Breast Cancer on 4 March 2014 I have had numerous trips to Perth to Specialists, for tests and operations, sorry but the last thing I'm thinking about is PATS form, if it was a simple process of logging on to the website, filling in an application and emailing to the appropriate district (in my case Wheatbelt office) I could have done it on my laptop while waiting for my appt, not needing a printer, and then another visit to the GP.
 - I had to ring the Wheatbelt office to obtain an email address so I could email further forms. After Specialist appointments the payment receipt could then be forwarded via email or uploaded. Maybe a customer or ID number could be given to each application so when sending/uploading receipts I state my customer/ID number, then all my applications & receipts are keep together.