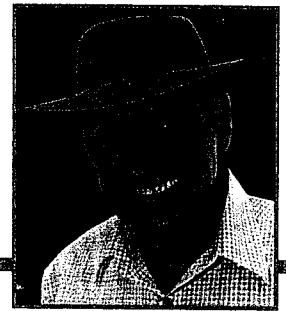
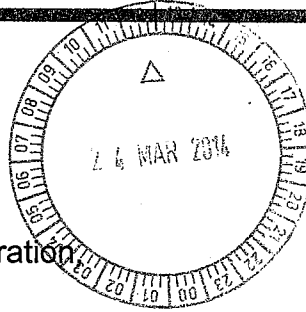


# Graham Jacobs MLA

## Your State Member for Eyre



Ms Lauren Mesiti  
 Committee Clerk  
 Standing Committee on Public Administration  
 Legislative Council  
 Parliament House  
 PERTH WA 6000



### Esperance Office

Phone: (08) 9071 6555

Fax: (08) 9071 6788

Office: Fenwick House, 107 Dempster St  
Esperance WA 6450

Postal: PO Box 1394 Esperance WA 6450

### Boulder Office

Phone: (08) 9093 1455

Fax: (08) 9093 1855

Office: 99 Burt Street, Boulder 6432

Postal: PO Box 2630, Boulder WA 6432

Email: [graham.jacobs@mp.wa.gov.au](mailto:graham.jacobs@mp.wa.gov.au)

### **Inquiry into the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme**

As the State Member for Eyre covering over 280,000 square kilometres, I represent a population of 31,188 (*source: 2011 census; ABS*), all who have limited to no access to Specialist Medical Services. The role of the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) is a vital necessity for regional people.

One of my real concerns is the almost complete lack of PATS subsidy for Dental services, specifically when the services relate directly to the health and well-being of a patient. Those that are treated under the MBS items in the Allied Health and Dental Services book (10975-10977) especially item 10977 should be a consideration. These patients are in need of Dental Specialist services, that are rarely provided for in regional areas, and in most cases their dental problems are extreme, affecting health overall. With careful monitoring and referral from both Dentist and General Practitioner as in the MBS, a procedure could be reached where a PATS subsidy for Dental Specialists could be made available.

Many matters concerning applications of PATS by doctors for their patients are not completed in a way that substantiates needs of patient to the administration of the scheme and indeed knowledge of eligibility criteria and what is required in addressing these conditions, then reaffirming updates to doctors in providing clear clinical rationales for modes of transport and eligibility for benefit. The issue of Taxi vouchers to those that are accessing the PATS scheme are constantly questioned by my patients, with guidelines currently stating;

“Additional transport assistance in the form of taxi or airport shuttle vouchers can be available if recommended by your doctor. Taxi vouchers are not routinely provided but in limited and exceptional circumstances will be considered.”

These patients approach my electorate office regarding the inability to receive reimbursement for taxi fares or alternatively receive vouchers for taxis to and from travel points and medical appointments. The patients who travel by train or plane, in most instances would be incapable of travelling the 600km's by car, and hence do not have an easy and inexpensive travel option for accessing medical appointments once in and around Perth. The prospecter train ends at the East Perth Terminal with the cost of a taxi one way to areas in Perth averaging anywhere from \$30 to \$100.

For example, Milroy Lodge is an accommodation service provided by the Cancer Council for cancer patients needing treatment in Perth. To take a taxi from the Perth Domestic Airport to Milroy Lodge, which is located in Shenton Park (20.2km's), would cost approximately \$40. Taking Bus transportation from the airport to Milroy Lodge takes approximately one and half hours, with a 500m walk up a steep incline. Transport from the East Perth terminal whilst shorter bus ride of only 45 minutes, still requires a walk of about 1.5kms up the same incline. Whilst a 500m incline may seem very little, for those that are already very ill, this is quite a struggle, especially after the travel from regional areas to Perth and the extra hour or more on public transport.

The consideration of reimbursing those that are travelling either by train or plane to Perth a taxi fare, either two and from station/airport to accommodation venue, or alternatively to and from the medical appointment, without the need of a doctor recommendation. Even some partial re-imburement would be helpful to my patients often both under financial and physical stress.

I would be please to attend a hearing around the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme, as it is one of the most frequent concerns brought to both my Esperance and Boulder Offices.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Graham Jacobs', written over the typed name below.

Dr Graham Jacobs

State Member for Eyre

14 March 2014