

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

INQUIRY INTO THE PATIENT ASSISTED TRAVEL SCHEME

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

SESSION FIVE

Members

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

Hearing commenced at 2.30 pm**Miss MELANIE BELLOTTI****Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Carnarvon Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation, sworn and examined:**

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, we have one more witness to hear from this afternoon, but is there anybody in the gallery now who thinks they have something as an experience with PATS that they would like to be sworn in as a witness to tell us on the record? One hand went up; sir, would you like to come and take a seat here?

Miss Bellotti: Can I go again?

The CHAIRMAN: You want another go?

Miss Bellotti: You want something!

The CHAIRMAN: Mel, let us hear from you because we can deem that Mel is still sworn in. While Lauren is doing the “Information for Witnesses” sheet, we will hear from you, Mel. Are you up for that, Jacqui?

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Yes, thanks.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you want to come and sit in front of the microphone here, Mel? This is for the recording.

Miss Bellotti: Shall I start?

The CHAIRMAN: Please do.

Miss Bellotti: Taryn was speaking about the things that they cover and what they do not cover. I know they focus on primary health, but they do not focus on allied health in like for dental and all those other things. Everyone around town knows anyway, but I went down for a gastric surgery, like, the visit in August, but in June I put the psychiatrist’s name instead of the referring surgeon, and they rejected the application. When I went down I had to put the surgeon’s name for it to be approved, and then when I was there we had to squeeze four different specialist appointments in, otherwise I could not go back and forth with the PATS because of what they deem —

The CHAIRMAN: That is something that we are hearing, too. We know, for instance in your instance of gastric surgery, that there are a number of things that will hang off that. One is dieticians —

Miss Bellotti: Yes, the dietician, psychiatrist, and one.

The CHAIRMAN: One is psychiatrists.

Miss Bellotti: The psychiatrist.

The CHAIRMAN: Exactly; and one will be actual exercise, which is a very important part.

Miss Bellotti: Yes; and the anaesthetist.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Miss Bellotti: And those other different areas were not covered. That is just with one instance. Yes, like what I was saying with the hearing; for the hearing aids we are fortunate enough that Hearing West and Hearing WA come up from time to time, but, like, they are restricted with their funding and —

The CHAIRMAN: Does the Earbus come up here as well—Harvey Coates with the Earbus Foundation?

Miss Bellotti: No. We have to send patients to Geraldton or to Perth to have the fittings done—to have everything done. Even if they need them replaced, PATS does not cover it; it hardly covers anything.

The CHAIRMAN: I think that is one of the things that we have certainly become aware of. I guess it is like all schemes that are put in place: if you are not doing a constant review of how up-to-date is that scheme, the scheme gets left behind. As we know, advances are being made in medical things. For instance, 10 years ago gastric surgery was not really on the radar, so it would not have been written into the guidelines.

Miss Bellotti: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: We have heard the same thing about cochlear implants —

Miss Bellotti: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: — where a patient can have the surgery for a cochlear implant and be covered under the PAT scheme, but they cannot be covered for the trip back. After you have had that surgery, you would have to have a break of two or three weeks before they switch it on; the switching on, which is the vital part of it, is not covered.

Miss Bellotti: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: I am not going to defend a system that needs to be looked at; I am just saying that this is one of things that is certainly becoming apparent to us.

Miss Bellotti: Yes. I have been in the Royal for well over 12 months now, and at the start it was frustrating dealing with the hospital. I know they are bound by rules and policies and procedures, but I have stumbled across some stuff, and they do not disclose things that people are eligible for. Like, our patients out at Gascoyne Junction—I have an old aunty out there, and for all these years she has been travelling in to Carnarvon to come and see a specialist at the hospital, and she could have been receiving reimbursements. It is only since I have started work that she has received them because I stumbled across that information. They do not give them fuel vouchers, but if they keep their fuel receipts they will be reimbursed. But, again, you have to jump through hoops to please the PATS clerks, which is frustrating; and, yes, the difference between primary and allied health is not recognised under the PAT scheme.

The CHAIRMAN: Terrific. We will take it on board.

Miss Bellotti: Thank you. That is my last shot!

The CHAIRMAN: You only get two shots; you cannot have more!

Hearing concluded at 2.36 pm
