



Lara Giddings, MP

Minister for Health

Friday, 14 November 2008

Significant Transport and Accommodation Reforms on the Way for Tasmanian Patients

A reform package announced today will herald a new way forward for transport and accommodation services in Tasmania.

The Minister for Health, Lara Giddings, said just over \$22 million will be spent over four years by both the State and Federal Governments to implement a number of immediate priorities under the reform package.

“The Tasmanian Government will contribute \$12.4 million towards a range of initiatives, including absorbing the significant cost of increasing patient travel and accommodation subsidies,” Ms Giddings said.

“Tasmania’s Health Plan made some hard decisions about service delivery to ensure a sustainable health system for decades to come.

“In making these decisions, the Government promised to achieve more equitable access to health care by improving transport and accommodation – the glue that keeps our services together.

“The Government’s Response released today addresses the recommendations contained in the Banskott Review of transport and accommodation and the Sharley Report into medical retrieval services.

“The Government has accepted all but seven of the 91 recommendations outlined in the Banskott Review and all of the recommendations set out in the Sharley Report.

“The Commonwealth’s \$10 million dollar funding contribution will fund a range of capital investments to improve patient transport particularly in the north and north-west of Tasmania.

Ms Giddings said that the Commonwealth’s investment will fund:

- new patient transport vehicles;
- upgrades to the Spurr Wing accommodation complex in Launceston;
- purchase of IT infrastructure for the Communications Centre to improve the coordination of patient transport;
- upgrades to Queenstown Airport;
- purchase of patient transfer and lifting equipment for Wynyard Airport; and
- the purchase of telehealth equipment for regional and remote health centres.

“In addition to the PTAS improvements the State Government will fund immediate

improvements to patient accommodation in Hobart, communication improvements and medical retrieval services.

“More than \$2.6 million will go towards a new centralised communication centre to coordinate ambulance services, patient and community transport and medical retrieval services across the state.

“An immediate priority will be to ensure all non-urgent patient transport is coordinated centrally to improve efficiency.

“Another key area for State Government funding is medical retrieval services – which will receive more than \$1.25 million.

“The Sharley review recommends a way forward to achieve a sustainable service in line with national standards.

“In the first instance we will be strengthening services by coordinating the escort service from Hobart through the central communications centre, with the specialist team to remain in Launceston along with the fixed wing aircraft for the foreseeable future.

“Clinical support will be enhanced by expanding the scope of practice for paramedics.

“Over the next three years the Department will review the future use of retrieval aircraft, including the fixed wing plane and the helicopter based in Hobart as well as the location of staff to support the service.

“At this stage, we are committed to ensuring the current services stay where they are until those reviews occur,” Ms Giddings said.

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