



Lara Giddings, MP

Minister for Health

Friday, 14 November 2008

Patient Travel Made Easier

Tasmania will lead the nation following significant increases in the accommodation allowance and fuel subsidy as part of a plan to improve services for patients forced to travel away from home for treatment.

Health Minister Lara Giddings said the increases were a key recommendation of an independent review of transport and accommodation services across the State.

Ms Giddings said improved transport and accommodation was critical to ensuring Tasmania's Health Plan is implemented successfully.

"These services are the glue that keeps our health system together – they ensure all Tasmanians can access the health services they need no matter where they live," Ms Giddings said.

"The increased subsidies will combine with the priorities announced today by the State and Federal Governments to ensure patients' lives are made a little easier.

"From December the level of financial assistance available to patients and their carers under the Patient Travel Assistance Scheme will be significantly increased.

"The increases under PTAS will be absorbed by the Tasmanian Government and adjusted annually in line with the Community and Health Service Industrial Agreement.

"The accommodation allowance for overnight stays within Tasmania will increase by \$16 dollars to \$46 per night.

"Outside Tasmania, the allowance will jump to \$64 from the current level of \$30 – in some instances doubling similar allowances offered in other states.

"The current 13 cents per kilometre fuel subsidy will increase to 19c/km – making Tasmania a national leader when it comes to subsidising travel for patients.

"These increases bring the total cost of the PTAS scheme in Tasmania to \$4.6 million dollars annually.

Ms Giddings said eligibility criteria would continue to require a patient to travel one way for up to 75 kilometres or more to access the nearest specialist medical service.

"However, I want to make it clear that the Government has not accepted a recommendation in the report to restrict the scheme to health care card holders and

pensioners only.

“We are not about limiting eligibility to this important service. We want it to be available to all Tasmanians who need it.

“In fact, we will be expanding the eligibility criteria to renal and oncology patients travelling more than 50 kilometres to the Launceston General Hospital, North West Regional Hospital and Royal Hobart Hospital.

“These patients attend treatment on an average of three times a week.”

Ms Giddings said the end result of the PTAS changes would be;

- better access to a wider range of services;
- better access to a wider range of low-cost accommodation options near the major acute hospitals;
- a reduction in out of pocket expenses for travel and accommodation for most patients;
- better, more efficient coordination of transport services; and
- more patients able to travel for specialist treatment.

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