

PATIENT TRAVEL ASSISTANCE SCHEME (PTAS)

Information Booklet for Patients
Frequently asked questions

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What is the Patient Travel Assistance Scheme?

The Patient Travel Assistance Scheme (PTAS) provides financial assistance with travel and / or accommodation costs for Tasmanian permanent residents to access a range of specialist medical services, where these services are not available locally.

This is an assistance scheme only and you are expected to make a patient contribution.

Am I eligible for PTAS?

You will be eligible for financial assistance under PTAS if you:

- are a Tasmanian permanent resident;
- are being referred to:
 - the nearest oncology/dialysis treatment centre more than 50 km (one-way) from your home; or
 - a specialist medical service/lymphoedema treatment more than 75 km (one-way) from your home; or
 - a specialist medical service not available in Tasmania;
- are travelling by a normal form of transport (the scheme does not meet ambulance costs);
- have a PTAS application form signed by your referring medical specialist, oral/maxillofacial surgeon or rural GP referring you to the nearest appropriate specialist; and
- receive treatment claimable under Medicare from a recognised medical specialist.

When wouldn't I receive PTAS assistance?

Financial assistance under PTAS is not available if you:

- are accessing a medical service that is not covered by the Scheme;

- are entitled to financial assistance through another scheme e.g. Motor Accident Insurance Board (MAIB), Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), Workers Compensation, or other compensable schemes;
- are travelling to a specialist that is not the closest available appropriate specialist in Tasmania; or
- live within 75 km (or 50 km for dialysis/ oncology) of the facility where the medical specialist is seeing you;
- seek specialist medical treatment outside Australia; or
- are referred for interstate services on the basis of shorter waiting lists.

What kinds of specialist medical services are covered?

The specialist medical services for which assistance is provided are defined as:

- services funded by the Tasmanian public hospital system (including those services that would be provided in Tasmanian hospitals if the specialist staff and infrastructure were available); and
- services covered by an item in the Commonwealth Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) except services specified elsewhere in the policy; or
- emergency dental services (defined as treatment of dental haemorrhage, facial/ neck swelling of a dental origin, or oral/ facial trauma including trauma to dentistry) provided by a general dental practitioner or an oral/maxillofacial surgeon; or
- routine dental treatment, in circumstances where a patient's medical condition necessitates specialist medical backup at the time of dental treatment (e.g. coagulation disorders, epilepsy, etc.).

This document is by necessity abridged, for a full description please refer to the PTAS policy document which is available on the DHHS website at: www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/ptas

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What services are not eligible?

The following services are ineligible for assistance under the scheme:

- surgery provided for cosmetic reasons only;
- general dental and orthodontic services (except in cases as defined above);
- general allied health services;
- Intro Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) services irrespective of whether it is for infertility or for any other reason;
- services that do not satisfy the “nearest specialist service” definition; or
- experimental treatment.

Some medical or allied health services are eligible for PTAS. Please refer below or to the PTAS policy and guidelines for more details.

What other medical or allied health services are eligible for PTAS?

Other eligible medical and allied health services include:

Jack Jumper Ant Allergy Program

Allied Health Services:

- Travelling for allied health services (for example, artificial limb fitting) as a part of the whole medical treatment process; or
- Travelling for lymphoedema treatment; and
- Other areas as determined by the PTAS Committee.

GP Proceduralists

Some medical services performed by GP Proceduralists are regarded as specialist medical service under the Scheme.

Pre-implantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD)

PGD is benefited where there is a known genetic disorder in a family and for which PGD is available.

In some cases patients are eligible for assistance for independent midwifery service, or participation in a clinical trial, subject to approval on a clinical basis.

Who can make the referrals?

The referral to a specialist medical service must be made by either a:

- medical specialist or oral/maxillofacial surgeon who is recognised in the appropriate speciality for the purpose of the Health Insurance Act 1973; or
- rural GP.

What financial assistance is available for travelling in Tasmania?

Financial assistance is available towards approved air and road travel, and accommodation (where applicable) expenses.

You can either make your own travel and /or accommodation arrangements and claim the subsidy on your return home from the specialist treatment, or organise with the local PTAS Coordinator to pre-book your travel and /or accommodation.

The subsidy rate for you and your approved escort(s) are as follows:

Travel¹

- the cost of return economy bus tickets; or
- private vehicle travel (21 cents/km) to and from the medical facility.

Residents of King Island and the Furneaux Islands

- The cost of a return economy airfare (Island Resident rates); plus the cost of the most economical, appropriate form of transport from the destination airport to and from the medical facility.

Accommodation

- A maximum of \$66 per night for commercial accommodation for each approved person.

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What financial assistance is available for travelling interstate (outside Tasmania)?

Financial assistance is available towards approved air/sea and road travel, and some accommodation (where applicable) expenses.

Your local PTAS Coordinator will assist you by making air/ferry ticket and accommodation bookings.

The subsidy rate for you and your approved escort(s) are as follows:

Travel

- If you live more than 75 km from the airport/ ferry terminal you can claim assistance with costs incurred for travel between home and the departure point.
- Your air/ferry ticket will be paid at no more than economy class.
- You may also claim your travel by the most economical transport option that is appropriate, between the airport/ferry terminal and the specialist medical facility.

Accommodation

- There is a maximum rate of \$87 per night for commercial accommodation for each approved person.

What contribution do I make?

Travel

Non-cardholders are required to contribute \$82.50 towards the cost of each return journey. Health Care or Pensioner Concession cardholders are also required to contribute but at a lower rate of \$16.50 towards the cost of each return journey. In any one financial year, the maximum contribution for a non-cardholder is \$330, and for a non-cardholder is \$132.

If these limits are reached, no further contributions will be required for that year.

You and any approved escort are required to meet the additional costs incurred if you choose a more expensive form of transport than that approved (e.g. travel by air when road transport is assessed as appropriate).

Accommodation

You and your approved escort are required to meet the cost where the accommodation cost is over the accommodation subsidy rate per night, per approved person.

Non-cardholders and their escort are required to pay the first two nights' accommodation costs for each stay.

Can I stay overnight before or after the medical appointment?

Financial assistance towards accommodation costs may be provided in the following circumstances if:

- transport to and from the health facility is not possible in the same day;
- the referring or nominated specialist certifies that overnight stay is required for clinical reasons;
- there are limited air services to King Island or Furneaux Islands; or
- approval has been granted to extend your stay by one or two days to attend associated allied health appointments.

Can I get an accommodation subsidy if I stay with my family or friends? How about parking fee and meals costs?

Private accommodation, parking or any incidental costs (e.g. phone calls or meals) are not eligible for subsidy.

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Can I have someone travel with me?

The Scheme assists with the travel and accommodation costs of an escort accompanying you if you are under the age of 18 years.

If you are aged 18 years or over, an escort may be eligible for financial assistance if the escort is necessary to actively assist you during your travel or treatment.

In some exceptional circumstances, approval may be given for financial assistance for more than one escort.

I can't afford to pay up-front for transportation costs. Can PTAS help?

Yes. If you anticipate difficulty in paying the travel cost up-front, please contact your local PTAS Coordinator to discuss an alternative arrangement.

I can't afford to pay up-front for accommodation cost. Can PTAS help?

Some accommodation providers agree to receive the PTAS accommodation allowance directly from DHHS which means you will only have to pay the "gap" between the accommodation fee and the PTAS accommodation allowance when checking out.

A number of accommodation providers offer a special daily or weekly rate especially for patients and their carers. This information can be obtained from your local PTAS office or online at www.dhhs.gov.au/ptas.

If you are unable to pay up-front, please contact your local PTAS office to discuss alternative options.

Can I get exemption for paying the patient contribution?

If you anticipate difficulty in paying the patient contribution, please contact your local PTAS office to discuss.

You will be required to prove that you are in financial difficulty. If your claim for hardship consideration is accepted, you will not be refused to access PTAS.

Am I eligible for PTAS if I travel interstate for a specialist medical service which is also available in Tasmania?

No. The Tasmanian Government is strongly committed to provide as many medical services as possible to all Tasmanians. If you wish to access a specialist medical service interstate, this will attract a cost to the Tasmanian Government through an Interstate Charging Agreement between the Tasmanian Government and other jurisdiction governments.

To ensure our services are safe, sustainable and appropriate to all Tasmanians, you are encouraged to support Tasmania's health system and access the service in Tasmania.

As a pregnant woman living on King Island or Flinders Island, do I get any financial assistance prior to the birth of my baby under PTAS?

Yes. You are entitled to two weeks' accommodation support prior to the birth of your baby (longer if the pregnancy is complicated) as well as support for necessary antenatal travel.

Your travel cost is based on the cost of a return economy airfare (Island Resident rates), plus the cost of the most economical, appropriate form of transport from the destination airport to and from the medical facility.

I am an organ donor or recipient. Am I eligible for PTAS? Can someone travel with me?

Yes. The donor and recipient are both eligible for the travel and accommodation subsidy.

An escort is also approved to accompany each of you.

Escorts' accommodation will be subsidised from the night prior to the operation until the patient (either donor or recipient) is medically fit to return home.

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This means that the donor and escort are only subsidised until the donor is medically fit to return home, although it is likely that this will be prior to the return of the recipient and his/her escort.

What if I miss my scheduled flight and medical appointment?

DHHS will only pay for one journey to a medical appointment.

If you are unable to travel on a pre-paid journey, you must provide 24 hours notice of cancellation.

If you miss the appointment without good reason or do not provide adequate notice, you are not eligible for a second trip unless there are exceptional circumstances.

My specialist appointment is cancelled or postponed. Can I get a travel and/or accommodation subsidy?

Yes. In the event that:

- a hospital admission for an elective procedure has been postponed; or
- a specialist appointment is cancelled or postponed; or
- the patient is not notified until after commencing the journey.
- In these cases, the Scheme will provide the level of financial assistance allowable towards the cost of your travel.

Can I ask for a second medical opinion and get a subsidy associated with my travel?

If your medical specialist requests a further opinion, you are entitled to receive the appropriate travel allowance and, if necessary, an accommodation allowance, to enable you to travel to and from the nominated specialist. If you are seeking a further medical opinion in your own right, you are not eligible for travel assistance.

How do I apply for assistance?

Your referring specialist or rural GP will normally provide you with the PTAS application form when you are referred for a specialist medical service. They should complete Section A of the PTAS form at this time and give it to you.

Wherever possible, the completed PTAS application form should be submitted to your local PTAS Coordinator as soon as the application form is completed by your referring specialist and you. This allows time for the eligibility and level of assistance to be assessed, and to inform you of the outcome of the application prior to making travel and accommodation arrangements.

It is important to note that the lodgement of an application form does not in itself represent approval.

What do I do if I need to travel urgently for my treatment and do not have time to submit the PTAS application form?

If you need to travel urgently, please contact the PTAS Coordinator directly to organise travel arrangements, subject to approval.

On your return, please complete the application form and, together with relevant receipts, submit to the PTAS Coordinator for subsidy payment.

What is the time limit in submitting the receipts after the journey is completed?

All claims, with all necessary documentation attached, must be lodged within four months of return from treatment.

How will I receive the subsidy payment?

Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) is the only method of subsidy payment. You are required to fill in your bank details on Section B of the PTAS application form. The bank details include:

- Name of the account holder;
- bank name;
- BSB number; and
- account number.

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When will I receive the subsidy?

You should expect to receive the subsidy for the travel and/or accommodation subsidy within four weeks.

What are my responsibilities in applying for PTAS?

It is your responsibility to:

- submit a PTAS application form to your local PTAS Office as soon as the application form is completed by your referring medical specialist or rural GP;
- ensure Section C of the PTAS application form is completed by the nominated specialist;
- travel and attend medical appointment as arranged;

- give adequate notice if unable to travel; and
- provide up-to-date contact details and bank account details if subsidy payment is expected.

Where can I find out more about PTAS?

- To discuss PTAS eligibility requirements or benefits, please call your nearest PTAS Coordinator.
- Information may also be obtained from:
- Department of Health and Human Services www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/ptas
- Service Tasmania
- Primary Health Facilities.

Offices

PTAS South

C/- Telstra Building
Ground Floor
70 Collins Street, Hobart 7000
Phone: 6166 8225 Fax: 6173 0321
Switchboard Phone: (03) 6166 8308

Launceston General Hospital

Charles Street, Launceston 7250
Phone: (03) 6777 6249
Fax: (03) 6348 7964
Switchboard Phone: (03) 6777 6777

North-West Regional Hospital

C/ Parkside Building
Strahan Street, Burnie 7320
Phone: (03) 6477 7734
Fax: (03) 6434 6998
Switchboard Phone: (03) 6493 6000

Devonport Community and Health Services Centre

23 Steele Street, Devonport 7310
Phone: (03) 6478 6177

West Coast District Hospital

60–64 Orr Street, Queenstown 7467
Phone: (03) 6495 1550

Rosebery Community Health Centre

Murchison Highway, Rosebery 7470
Phone: (03) 6495 1570

Smithton District Hospital

74 Brittons Road, Smithton 7330
Phone: (03) 6478 9520

King Island Hospital and Health Centre

31 Edward Street Currie, King Island 7256
Phone: (03) 6462 9900



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