

STAR COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

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23 July 2012

The Chair

Health and Community Services Committee

Parliament House

Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Sir,

RE: Palliative Care Services and Home Services Enquiry

Special Transport Assistance Redlands Association inc (STAR Community Transport) is a not for profit, charity, based in the Redlands with its offices at Cleveland. Most of its activities concern transporting frail and disabled clients (both under 65 years and 65 years and over). Most transport is funded through the Queensland Government Community Care program for under 65's, (around 15% of total funding) and Commonwealth Government HACC(Home and Community Care) program for 65 years and over.(around 85% of total funding).


Like many Community Transport services, STAR Community Transport has difficulty defining eligibility of clients under the above two programs, and the Queensland Health Non Urgent, Non Ambulance program (NUNA), which is based on transporting clients with chronic medical conditions including palliative. STAR Community Transport also has difficulty in providing services to clients/applicants who receive funding for disability services under the National Disability Agreement. The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme will further create confusion in services offered, and funding obtained.

STAR Community Transport recommends that the enquiry examine the current eligibility of clients /applicants under Queensland Community Care , Queensland Health NUNA and Queensland Disability programs, and funding, and provide clear definition for all concerned. (STAR Community Transport is not aware of whether the enquiry will look at the funding provided by Commonwealth HACC program, for 65 years and over).

STAR Community Transport will explain this in detail in the following pages, and welcomes the opportunity for further research by your Committee into solving the many barriers that present with ill/frail/disabled clients, in their finding suitable transport to medical destinations that help their conditions.

STAR Community Transport finds it difficult in adhering to funding programs, and definitions, and doing its best to provide transport services to in the main elderly, frail, disabled, chronically ill clients and applicants, who do not understand the very difficult eligibility requirements, of the different programs.

Yours truly


Peter Mann

Operations Manager

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24 JUL 2012

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY
SERVICES COMMITTEE



Home and Community Care
A NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATION AND THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT
HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

- 1 **SUMMARY-** STAR Community Transport provides 250-300 trips per day, transporting our clients from their homes to destinations including shops, social outlets, visits to family, GP's and to hospitals. The initial focus of HACC transport funding was to provide local transport in the Redlands, but through necessity, our clients requirements to access hospital and medical professionals in Brisbane South, and Brisbane North, has resulted in about 35% of our trips having destinations outside the Redlands, and a significant number at the major hospitals around Brisbane (including Sunnybank and Logan).
- 2 **STAR Community Transport** issue is abiding by funding definition for transport of in the main, two classes of clients- the clients who have a frailty or disability, restricting their mobility, and those clients who have a chronic medical condition. (and those with a combination of both).
- 3 According to the recently released **Queensland Community Care Services manual** (under 65's), formerly part of the HACC program, and we quote: " Transport assists clients to access services in their local community, such as shops, post office, banks, pharmacy and general practitioner. Queensland Community Care does not provide patient transport services (including for day surgery, chronic medical treatment, hospital admission and discharge) as these are provided through other government agencies, primarily Queensland Health.
- 4 According to the Department of Health and Ageing (Commonwealth, 65 years and over), " a chronic medical condition is one that has been (or is likely to be) present for six month or longer. It includes but is not limited to conditions such as asthma, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, and stroke".

Our understanding that STAR Community Transport cannot transport clients who have a chronic medical condition for treatment, is very difficult to practice, and to explain to new clients. Our history has meant that STAR **does** transport clients for cancer, and other treatments, but new applicants are declined because of our understanding of the above terminology.

NUNA- (Non-Urgent, NON-Ambulance Patient Transfer) Program- this program was initiated in April/May 2011, and over time STAR was granted preferred status to the Wynnum, Redlands, Prince Alfred (PA) Hospitals. The purpose of this program is to alleviate the burden on the Queensland Ambulance Service, by allowing Community Transport Services, and Taxi's, access to providing transport to eligible patients, at a significantly lower cost than utilising ambulances. STAR considers that clients with a Chronic Medical Condition , as above not allowed transport under the former HACC programs, would be transported by ourselves, and other Community Transport providers, but in our case, this has not eventuated. Over the past 8 months, STAR has been utilised for less than 10 trips, despite accessing vehicles and drivers to be available as required. Of course, this creates pressure and angst with applicants who need transport, but cannot access services through all funding programs.

For the Community Transport Service Provider, the number of trips undertaken under the NUNA scheme is important, as funding is significantly higher than the new funding from State and Commonwealth programs. From the viewpoint of Queensland Health, STAR believes that using Community Transport Services provider is significantly beneficial in terms of cost than using ambulances and taxi's.



In summary, the former HACC programs emphasise the non-availability of funding for those with Chronic medical conditions, and the perceived program initiated by Queensland Health to contribute to the welfare of these clients is not being allocated to the Community Transport Service providers, in significant numbers.

STAR is often rung up by new applicants seeking hospital transport for Chronic Illness, and are referred to Patient discharge/transport staff at the hospitals. In some cases, Hospital staff ring back to arrange transport, but needing to use our HACC funding – when asked to consider using the NUNA funding, they appear to be unaware of this scheme, and eventually the client, in some cases comes back to STAR, looking for transport because the NUNA funding has not been allocated to them.

STAR Community Transport believes in the aims and ideals of the Commonwealth HACC and Queensland Government Community Care programs, being to provide Community services to those who have “ difficulty performing core activities of daily living due to functional limitations”. Community Transport is offered to those who have difficulty accessing public transport.

However, our ability to define the eligibility of clients, or new applicants in terms of their functional limitations, and withdrawing availability of transport services to those with chronic medical conditions, to a scheme (NUNA) which does not utilise the resources of the Community Transport providers, is very difficult, and distorts the intent of the funding programs available.

Disability Services- STAR Community Services is regularly contacted by parents/carers of disabled applicants, who receive funding through Disability Services. Our issues here include that our providing transport services under Queensland Community Care funding or applicants who receive funding from other Government Sources, including Mobility funding through Centrelink, contradicts eligibility issues of clients receiving funding from different government sources, and the issue of the amount of funding received that does not cover required transport costs eg our local Cerebral Palsy Respite centre does not have sufficient vehicles to pick up and take home their disabled clients (wheelchair fast), and their parents/carers do not receive sufficient funding through Disability Services and mobility Allowance to cover maxi-taxi fares two-three days per week to transport their family member to respite. STAR Community Transport has filled the gap, by providing services under the Queensland Community Care program (under 65's), at a increased cost by using wheel chair access vehicles, and in probable contradiction to requirements not to use funds for clients where other government funding is utilised.

STAR Community Transport welcomes review of the above considerations, and the writer can be contacted on 07 38216699, or by e-mail at pmann@starct.org.au



home and community care
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