

Question on Notice
No. 371
Asked on 21 May 2013

MR KNUTH asked the Minister for Health (MR SPRINGBORG)-

QUESTION:

Will the Minister explain why patients (mostly pensioners) who are eligible for Patient Travel Subsidy now have to wait up to eight weeks for this subsidy to be available?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Dalrymple for his question.

As you are aware, the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme (PTSS) provides financial support for patients to access specialist health services that are more than 50 kilometres from their closest public hospital. Patients from regional, rural and remote areas of Queensland are the main users of the Scheme.

The Queensland Government acknowledges the financial difficulties experienced by some Queenslanders in accessing specialist health services. That is why the Government has committed \$106 million over four years to honour a key election commitment to double PTSS subsidies. From 1 January 2013, the vehicle mileage subsidy increased from 15 to 30 cents per kilometre and the commercial accommodation subsidy increased from \$30 to \$60 per person per night for patients and approved escorts, making the PTSS the most generous scheme in Australia.

Following implementation of the PTSS election commitment from 1 January 2013, a number of Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) have reviewed local PTSS processes and implemented improvements in line with financial management and fraud prevention processes.

These processes enable HHSs to make local decisions about payment methods available for PTSS subsidies. With the increase in subsidy levels needing to be reimbursed, most hospitals are now paying PTSS subsidies using electronic funds transfer or cheque to minimise security risks. In some cases, this change has resulted in patients experiencing longer processing times than previously applied under the cash payment system.

The recommended time frame for processing PTSS subsidy payments is 30 days. The Department of Health has written to each HHS advising them of the recommended time frame for processing PTSS payments.