

Question on Notice

No. 1472

Asked on 16 November 2023

MR S BENNETT ASKED MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN (HON S FENTIMAN)—

QUESTION

With reference to Question on Notice No. 1115 of 2023 about the three month delays at Bundaberg Hospital with processing Patient Travel Subsidy refunds to patients— Will the Minister (a) advise if the Minister is aware that the delay in refunds has increased even further and (b) take urgent action to deal with the backlog of refunds which in many cases are nearly four months behind?

ANSWER

As I advised to the Member in my response to Question on Notice 1115-2023, reimbursement processing times depend on a range of factors including the time taken for patients or their primary care doctors to provide information required for the Hospital and Health Service (HHS) to appropriately assess and process their claim; unplanned staff absences; and increased demand and activity for the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme (PTSS) across Queensland. The volume of claims received by each HHS is managed and processed within fixed staffing resources.

Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service (WBHHS) has implemented several service improvements to assist in managing delays. With the recruitment of additional staff members, the HHS has now been able to maintain and work towards significantly improved payment timeframes. This work will continue until the delay has been addressed.

I am advised that all HHSs have the ability to book air, bus, ferry or rail fares for patients able to access these transport options in their area. Booking through the HHS alleviates the need for patients to outlay travel costs or rely on waiting for a subsidy. Approved commercial accommodation subsidies can also be paid directly to the accommodation provider by the approving public hospital facility, again, assisting patients with outlay costs.

As I have publicly advised, my Department is conducting a review into the administration of the PTSS, with a view to improving the mechanisms through which important information – such as the ability to pre-book travel, or the need for primary care doctors to provide sufficient detail on application forms – is shared with the community. In addition, the review is examining measures that can be taken to improve the accessibility of the scheme.