

Question on Notice

No. 844

Asked on 16 June 2023

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

QUESTION

Will the Minister advise (a) if the Minister is aware that the significant reduction in scheduled Tilt Train services from Bundaberg, Rockhampton and Gladstone will result in many elderly residents travelling to Brisbane to attend specialist appointments having to add two extra nights' accommodation, with potential extra cost of \$400 per single trip and (b) if so, will the Minister increase the patient travel subsidy for accommodation to recognise the effect of these scheduled train cancellations?

ANSWER

I am advised essential fleet maintenance will impact Queensland Rail's ability to maintain a full timetable between Brisbane, Bundaberg and Rockhampton for approximately 12 to 14 months, with an interim timetable coming into effect on 17 July 2023, and works due for completion by mid-2024.

Queensland Rail have further advised that a morning and evening train (day trip return) will be servicing Wide Bay every weekday, except Wednesday. Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) have been provided a copy of the new timetable and Patient Travel Offices will be working with patients, to manage new bookings, as required.

I acknowledge the additional costs Queenslanders living in rural and remote locations incur when accessing specialist health services. In response to these growing pressures, as part of the 2023-24 State Budget the Palaszczuk Government is providing an additional \$70.261 million funding over four years to increase existing Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme (PTSS) concession rates.

Commencing on 1 July 2023, accommodation rates for eligible PTSS patients will increase from \$60 per person, per night to \$70 per person, per night and mileage concession rates will increase from 30 cents to 34 cents per kilometre.

The PTSS provides financial assistance to eligible patients who are required to travel for specialist health services not available locally (within 50 kilometres of the patient's closest public hospital or public health facility). This assistance supports vulnerable Queenslanders, however, the PTSS is not intended to cover all costs associated with accessing specialist health services. Any patient experiencing financial hardship which is impeding their ability to attend specialist appointments is encouraged to discuss this with their local HHS for special consideration.

PTSS is administered by the HHSs, through funding allocated by the Department of Health, and in accordance with the PTSS Guidelines. 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.