

Question on Notice

No. 77

Asked on 14 February 2024

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

QUESTION

With reference to rural people travelling hundreds of kilometres to Cairns for hospital appointments, who often arrive to find their appointments are cancelled, and if they have been held up due to circumstances beyond their control, such as road works, road accidents or poor weather conditions—

Will the Minister investigate this issue and implement a system to prioritise rural people who have to travel significant distances for specialist hospital treatment?

ANSWER

The Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme provides financial assistance mostly to rural, remote, and regional Queenslanders who have to travel to access essential specialist health services not available within 50km of their closest public health facility.

Queensland Health is currently conducting a review of the administration of the PTSS, with a particular focus on ways the current framework can be streamlined for both patients and the Hospital and Health Services.

As part of the 2023-24 State Budget, the Miles Labor Government provided an additional \$70.3 million funding over four years to increase the existing Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme (PTSS) concession rates.

On 1 July 2023, our government committed to also funding the full cost of repatriation of deceased eligible PTSS patients on PTSS-related travel to their Queensland place of residence or their Queensland Traditional Homelands or their Queensland First Nations Country.

In relation to the Cairns Hospital and Health Service, I am advised that rural patients are most often scheduled for mid-morning or early afternoon appointments to allow for travel to and from the Cairns Hospital.

Where patients are delayed for arrival to their appointment, they are encouraged to contact the Hospital using the number provided to them at the time of booking their appointment, to ensure the hospital can accommodate a late arrival.

If there are any changes to a patient's appointment they are notified as soon as practical, to accommodate an alternative time.