

PATIENT TRAVEL ASSISTANCE SCHEME (PTAS)

**Information Booklet for Medical
Practitioners**

Frequently Asked Questions

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What is the Patient Travel Assistance Scheme?

The Patient Travel Assistance Scheme (PTAS) provides financial assistance with travel and / or accommodation costs for Tasmanian permanent residents to access a range of specialist medical services where these services are not available locally.

This is an assistance scheme only and patients are expected to make a patient contribution.

Who is eligible for PTAS?

Patients will be eligible for financial assistance under PTAS if they:

- are a Tasmanian permanent resident; and
- are being referred to:
 - the nearest oncology/dialysis treatment centre more than 50 km (one-way) from their home; or
 - a specialist medical service/lymphoedema treatment more than 75 km (one-way) from their home; or
 - a specialist medical service not available in Tasmania; and
- are travelling by a normal form of transport (the scheme does not meet ambulance costs); and
- have a PTAS application form signed by their referring medical specialist, oral/maxillofacial surgeon or rural GP referring them to the nearest appropriate specialist; and
- receive treatment claimable under Medicare from a recognised medical specialist.

When wouldn't a patient receive PTAS assistance?

Financial assistance under PTAS is not available if they:

- are accessing a medical service that is not covered by the Scheme;

- are entitled to financial assistance through another scheme e.g. Motor Accident Insurance Board (MAIB), Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), Workers Compensation, or other compensable schemes;
- are travelling to a specialist that is not the closest available appropriate specialist in Tasmania; or
- live within 75 km (or 50 km for dialysis/ oncology) of the facility where the medical specialist is seeing them;
- seek specialist medical treatment outside Australia; or
- are referred for interstate services on the basis of shorter waiting lists.

What kinds of specialist medical services are covered?

The specialist medical services for which assistance is provided are defined as:

- services funded by the Tasmanian public hospital system (including those services that would be provided in Tasmanian hospitals if the specialist staff and infrastructure were available); and
- services covered by an item in the Commonwealth Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) except services specified elsewhere in the policy; or
- emergency dental services (defined as treatment of dental haemorrhage, facial/ neck swelling of a dental origin, or oral/ facial trauma including trauma to dentistry) provided by a general dental practitioner or
- an oral/maxillofacial surgeon; or
- routine dental treatment, in circumstances where a patient's medical condition necessitates specialist medical backup at the time of dental treatment (e.g. coagulation disorders, epilepsy, etc.).

This document is by necessity abridged, for a full description of PTAS eligibility criteria and other conditions, please refer to the PTAS policy document which is available from the DHHS website at: www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/ptas

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What services are not eligible?

The following services are ineligible for assistance under the scheme:

- surgery provided for cosmetic reasons only;
- general dental and orthodontic services (except in cases as defined above);
- general allied health services;
- Intro Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) services irrespective of whether it is for infertility or for any other reason;
- services that do not satisfy the “nearest specialist service” definition; or
- experimental treatment.

Some medical or allied health services are eligible for PTAS. Please refer below or to the PTAS policy and guidelines for more details.

What other medical or allied health services are eligible for PTAS?

Other eligible medical and allied health services include:

Jack Jumper Ant Allergy Program

Allied Health Services:

- Travelling for allied health services (for example, artificial limb fitting) as a part of the whole medical treatment process; or
- Travelling for lymphoedema treatment; and
- Other areas as determined by the PTAS Committee.

GP Proceduralists

Some medical services performed by GP Proceduralists are regarded as specialist medical service under the Scheme.

Pre-implantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD)

PGD is benefited where there is a known genetic disorder in a family and for which PGD is available.

In some cases patients are eligible for assistance for independent midwifery service, or participation in a clinical trial, subject to approval on a clinical basis.

Who can make the referrals?

The referral to a specialist medical service must be made by either a:

- medical specialist or oral/maxillofacial surgeon who is recognised in the appropriate speciality for the purpose of the Health Insurance Act 1973; or
- rural GP* to Tasmanian medical specialists or oral/maxillofacial surgeons; or

* King Island rural GPs (District Medical Officers) may refer patients to interstate medical specialists on the basis of clinical grounds.

What financial assistance is available for travelling in Tasmania?

Financial assistance is available towards approved air and road travel, and accommodation (where applicable) expenses.

Patients can either make their own travel and /or accommodation arrangements and claim the subsidy on return home from the specialist treatment, or organise with the local PTAS Coordinator to pre-book the travel and /or accommodation.

The subsidy rate for the patient and their approved escort(s) are as follows:

Travel

- the cost of return economy bus tickets; or
- private vehicle travel (21 cents/km) to and from the medical facility.

Residents of King Island and the Furneaux Islands

- The cost of a return economy airfare (Island Resident rates); plus the cost of the most economical, appropriate form of transport from the destination airport to and from the medical facility.

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Accommodation

- A maximum of \$66 per night for commercial accommodation for each approved person.

What financial assistance is available for travelling interstate (outside Tasmania)?

Financial assistance is available towards approved air/sea and road travel, and some accommodation (where applicable) expenses. The local PTAS Coordinator will assist the patient by making air/ferry ticket and accommodation bookings.

The subsidy rate for the patient and their approved escort(s) are as follows:

Travel

- If they live more than 75 km from the airport/ ferry terminal they can claim assistance with costs incurred for travel between home and the departure point.
- The air/ferry ticket will be paid at no more than economy class.
- They may also claim their travel by the most economical transport option that is appropriate, between the airport/ferry terminal to the specialist medical facility.

Accommodation

- A maximum of \$87 per night for commercial accommodation for each approved person.

Can they have someone travel with them?

The Scheme assists with the travel and accommodation costs of an escort accompanying them if the patient is under the age of 18 years. If the patient is aged 18 years or over, an escort may be eligible for financial assistance if the escort is necessary to actively assist them during their travel or treatment. In some exceptional circumstances, approval may be given for financial assistance for more than one escort.

What contribution does the patient make?

Travel

Health Care or Pensioner Concession cardholders are required to contribute \$16.50 towards the cost of each return journey. Non-cardholders are required to contribute \$82.50 towards the cost of each return journey.

In any one financial year, the maximum contribution rate for a cardholder is \$132, and for a non-cardholder is \$330. If these limits are reached, no further contributions will be required for that year.

The patient and any approved escort are required to meet the additional costs incurred if they choose a more expensive form of transport than that approved (e.g. travel by air when road transport is assessed as appropriate).

Accommodation

Patients and their approved escort are required to meet the cost where the accommodation cost is over the accommodation subsidy rate per night, per approved person.

Non-cardholders and their escort are required to pay the first two nights' accommodation costs for each stay.

Is the patient eligible for PTAS if they travel interstate for a specialist medical service which is also available in Tasmania?

No. The Tasmanian Government is strongly committed to provide as many medical services as possible to all Tasmanians. If the patient wishes to access a specialist medical service interstate, this will attract a cost to the Tasmanian Government through an Interstate Charging Agreement between the Tasmanian Government and other jurisdiction governments.

To ensure our services are safe, sustainable and appropriate to all Tasmanians, you are encouraged to support Tasmania's health system and refer your patients to the service in Tasmania.

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How can patients apply for assistance?

The referring specialist or rural GP should provide patients with the PTAS application form when they are referred for a specialist medical service. You should complete Section A of the PTAS application form at this time.

Wherever possible, the completed PTAS application form should be submitted to their local PTAS Coordinator as soon as the application form is completed by you and your patient. This allows time for the eligibility and level of assistance to be assessed, and to inform the patient of the outcome of the application prior to making travel and/or accommodation arrangements.

It is important to note that the lodgement of an application form does not in itself represent approval.

What do I do if my patients needs to travel urgently for treatment and does not have time to submit the PTAS application form?

Please contact the PTAS Coordinator directly to organise travel arrangements, subject to approval.

What is the time limit in submitting the receipts after the journey is completed?

All claims, with all necessary documentation attached, must be lodged within four months of return from treatment.

How do I complete the form?

You will need to complete Section A of the PTAS application form. The form is available electronically from the DHHS website: www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/ptas

After completing Section A, you can either:

Email:

1. complete the form by typing directly into the boxes provided
2. save the completed form with a new file name "Patient's first name_Patient's last name"

3. choose the "Print Form" button to prepare a copy for your/patient's records
4. click "Submit by Email" to send the completed form.

Post, fax or deliver in person:

1. choose the "Print Form" button to print an application form
2. complete the form
3. fax, post or bring the completed form to your local PTAS Office.

The Patient should complete Section B and retain Section C of the application form to take to the nominated specialist who will be providing the specialist service to complete Section C.

What information do I need to fill on Section A of the PTAS application form?

It is very important to provide detailed information. This will speed up the approval process and prevent further queries.

For example:

Question 4: Consultation/procedure to be undertaken

It is acknowledged that referring specialists can find it difficult to maintain current knowledge of specialist services available in Tasmania.

For these reasons, you are requested to clearly specify the patient's diagnosis and the treatment for which the patient is being referred. Information should be explicit, words such as "review" or "consultation" are normally insufficient. Details should be provided such as "post-surgery review" or "pre-surgery assessment".

This will assist the Medical Authoriser to determine whether the service is available in Tasmania, and thus the eligibility of the application for assistance, without the need to contact you for clarification.

If insufficient information is provided the applicant risks either being refused assistance, or having their travel delayed.

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Question 7: Reason for escort

In most cases emotional support is not considered a sufficient reason for subsidising an escort. The Medical Authoriser may request details as to what clinical support (such as to facilitate and/or participate directly in the patient's care during the travel) an escort is able to provide before approving travel.

What can I do to assist patients needing PTAS?

- Provide advice to your patients that travel assistance may be available to them through PTAS;
- Refer patients to PTAS Coordinators if you are unable to assist;
- Provide sufficient PTAS information to patients;

- Complete the PTAS application form;
- Explain to patients the importance of attending their medical appointment; and
- Assure patients that their information will be treated as confidential.

I have some queries, where can I get more information?

Should you have any concerns in meeting the requirements, please feel free to contact the PTAS Office at the nearest major public hospital. PTAS Coordinators can direct you to the appropriate Medical Authoriser if required.

The PTAS policy for viewing is available from the DHHS website at: www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/ptas

Patient Travel Assistance Scheme Offices

PTAS South

C/- Telstra Building
Ground Floor
70 Collins Street, Hobart 7000
Phone: 6166 8225 Fax: 6173 0321
Switchboard Phone: (03) 6166 8308

Launceston General Hospital

Charles Street, Launceston 7250
Phone: (03) 6777 6249
Fax: (03) 6348 7964
Switchboard Phone: (03) 6777 6777

North-West Regional Hospital

C/ Parkside Building
Strahan Street, Burnie 7320
Phone: (03) 6477 7734
Fax: (03) 6434 6998
Switchboard Phone: (03) 6493 6000

Other PTAS Coordinators

Devonport Community and Health Services Centre

23 Steele Street, Devonport 7310
Phone: (03) 6478 6177

West Coast District Hospital

60–64 Orr Street, Queenstown 7467
Phone: (03) 6495 1550

Rosebery Community Health Centre

Murchison Highway, Rosebery 7470
Phone: (03) 6495 1570

Smithton District Hospital

74 Brittons Road, Smithton 7330
Phone: (03) 6478 9520

King Island Hospital and Health Centre

31 Edward Street Currie, King Island 7256
Phone: (03) 6462 9900





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