



Gordon Nuttall MP
Member for Sandgate



**Queensland
Government**

Minister for Health

MI124608

Mr N Laurie
The Clerk of Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

	Paper No.: 2213	
	Date: 23/11/04	
	Member:	
	Tabled	Tabled, by leave
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Clerk at the Table:		

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23/11/04

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 21 October 2004 regarding petition number 391-04, lodged by Mr S Knuth MP, Member for Charters Towers, and received by the House on 20 October 2004.

In relation to the petition, please refer to the following response.

“The Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme (PTSS) provides a subsidy (as opposed to the total cost) to patients and in some cases their carers, to enable them to access specialist medical services that are not available within 50kms of their nearest public hospital.

The Scheme currently provides a private motor vehicle allowance of 10 cents per kilometre. Payment is calculated on the distance between the post office nearest to a patient’s local hospital and the post office nearest to the treating hospital.

Unless prior approval has been given, the private motor vehicle allowance is capped at the level of the cheapest form of public transport between the patients referring centre and treating centre. As such, if the private motor vehicle allowance were increased to 20 cents per kilometre, there is no guarantee that the full entitlement would be paid to every patient choosing this travel option.

The Scheme eligibility and subsidy entitlement criteria are designed to extend equity of access for all Queenslanders in need of medical services. To ensure that isolated patients continue to have access to these specialist medical services within the finite resources available, the eligibility rules and limits on subsidy entitlements are necessary.

Whilst the 10 cents per kilometre mileage rate has not increased, expenditure on the Scheme overall has increased substantially over the last few years to meet demand. For instance, mileage expenditure for 2003/2004 totalled \$3.725M, approximately 10% higher than in 2002/2003, and 18% of total Scheme expenditure. Given this significant amount, even a small increase in the mileage allowance, as opposed to a doubling of the rate, would have significant cost implications for Queensland Health.

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Further, despite the mileage rate not changing, in recent years Queensland Health has increased patient's access to the Scheme through other measures, such as reducing the distance criterion from 200km to 50km and abolishing the mandatory patient contribution that had been up to \$40.

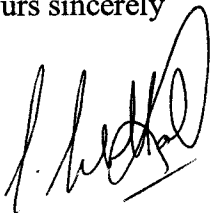
Also, Queensland Health is actively working to improve the health of all Queenslanders, particularly those in rural areas, through innovative approaches to health service delivery. For instance, telehealth services use telecommunication technologies to establish communication and interaction between a patient and a provider, despite their geographic separation.

Queensland Health is also conscious of ensuring as little 'red tape' as possible for patients accessing the Scheme. For instance, PTSS application forms are available to medical practitioners so that they are ideally completed in the same consultation in which the patient is referred to a specialist medical service.

However, whilst Queensland Health attempts to ensure that access to the Scheme is streamlined, given the large number of stakeholders involved in the operation of the Scheme and the need for the Department to meet audit requirements, this is an ongoing challenge."

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Mr Michael Fiechtner, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone (07) 323 41191.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Nuttall', written over a horizontal line.

GORDON NUTTALL MP
Minister for Health
Member for Sandgate

1.9 NOV 2004