



Patient Assisted Travel Scheme Policy

1. Background

The Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) is funded by the WA State Government through the Royalties for Regions (RfR) scheme and is administered by the WA Country Health Service (WACHS) Country Health Innovation (CHI) program.

The intent of the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) is to address variability in health outcomes, service access and equity for country people by providing financial assistance to eligible country residents to access eligible medical services not available locally.

This policy, PATS Guideline and PATS User Manual describe eligibility criteria, business processes and responsibilities of WACHS staff and recipients receiving assistance through the scheme; including eligible escorts.

Any changes to this policy, PATS eligibility criteria and or the associated subsidies require Ministerial endorsement.

PATS is an intrastate scheme. However, assistance will be provided for travel to another state if the referral is to the nearest specialist and all other PATS criteria are met.

2. Policy Statement

PATS provides financial assistance towards travel and accommodation expenses to eligible permanent residents of a WACHS region and their approved escorts who are required to travel a minimum distance to access the nearest eligible medical specialist services including Telehealth enabled services and visiting specialists.

2.1 PATS Guideline

The [Patient Assisted Travel Scheme Guideline](#) supports this policy providing comprehensive information regarding eligibility criteria, travel and accommodation subsidies, the application process, appeals and complaints and compliments processes for consumers and staff.

2.2 PATS User Manual

The [PATS User Manual](#) supports this policy providing assistance to PATS staff to consistently deliver the PATS Program across all WA Country Health Service (WACHS) regions by outlining business processes, accountabilities and detailed decision making support.

2.2.1 Exceptional Rulings

Exceptional rulings are made when an applicant meets the intent of the PATS scheme, but does not clearly meet the strict parameters of the PATS eligibility criteria. Please see the WACHS [Patient Assisted Travel Scheme - Exceptional Ruling Guideline](#) for information.

3. Definitions

PATS	Patient Assisted Travel Scheme
RfR	Royalties for Regions

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Program Manager

The Program Manager is responsible for:

- providing state wide leadership on PATS strategy and administration
- managing the PATS state wide budget
- delivering projects supporting the strategic direction of the PATS program
- developing and maintaining PATS policy and documents in partnership with key stakeholders
- facilitating consistent application of PATS policy state wide
- facilitating communication between key stakeholder groups regarding PATS
- representing WACHS where required to government and other forums
- monitoring, evaluating and reporting on PATS program performance and outcomes
- driving community awareness of PATS.

4.2 WACHS Regional Directors

Regional Directors are responsible for:

- providing leadership on PATS administration within the region including managing the PATS regional budget
- making decisions on exceptional rulings for cases outside of PATS eligibility criteria which meet the intent of the scheme
- making decisions and approving PATS assistance for extraordinary travel such as a charter flight from a remote community.

4.3 WACHS PATS Regional Coordinators

PATS Regional Coordinators are responsible for:

- providing leadership on PATS administration within the region
- ensuring training is provided to PATS staff to support effective and consistent delivery of the PATS program

- assisting with interpreting the PATS policy and supporting documents when issues and questions arise
- providing the Regional Director with relevant information in relation to exceptional rulings
- responding to complaints from consumers and other key regional stakeholders
- communicating and marketing PATS to all key stakeholders in the region
- representing the region on the PATS Working Group and in other forums where PATS is a topic of discussion or area of interest
- monitoring and reviewing PATS performance trends within the region.

4.4 WACHS PATS Clerks

WACHS PATS Clerks are to:

- assist clients through the application process including providing all the required forms and information related to PATS eligibility
- check all forms received to ensure they are completed correctly and in full
- liaise with referring practitioners and specialists to resolve any queries in relation to PATS claims received and specialist appointments attended
- liaise with travel and accommodation providers and where required assist clients with making their travel arrangements including bookings for commercial accommodation, surface travel and air flights
- liaise with the relevant staff at hospitals and health services to assist clients with travel and accommodation bookings upon being discharged from hospital
- use payment cards where available and issue purchase orders and vouchers for purchase of fuel, surface travel, accommodation, air flights and taxis and authorise the accounts for payment when received from providers
- liaise with travel and accommodation providers for, the issue of credit notes and account queries
- calculate reimbursements for approved claims for travel and accommodation assistance
- input all necessary information into the PATS database, including approved and declined claims
- follow up approved outstanding claims have been certified to verify that clients have attended appointments
- assist with training and review of PATS processes within the region

4.5 Referring Practitioners

Referring practitioners are to:

- refer applicants in accordance with this policy to the nearest eligible specialist including closest public, private, visiting specialists or specialist service including telehealth when the service can be viably delivered via this mechanism
- complete all relevant sections and sign the PATS Application/Claim form
- provide adequate clinical reasons where applicable to support the application
- provide further information when requested to support a client's application
- approve escorts in accordance with the PATS policy and guidelines.

5. Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy document may constitute a breach of the WA Health system Code of Conduct (Code). The Code is part of the [Integrity Policy Framework](#) issued pursuant to section 26 of the [Health Services Act 2016](#) (WA) and is binding on all WACHS staff which for this purpose includes trainees, students, volunteers, researchers, contractors for service (including all visiting health professionals and agency staff) and persons delivering training or education within WACHS.

All Staff are required to work within policies and guidelines to make sure that WACHS is a safe, equitable and positive place to be.

6. Records Management

All WACHS corporate records must be stored in the approved Electronic Documents and Records Management System.

[Records Management Policy](#)

7. Evaluation

Evaluation of this policy is to be carried out by the Program Manager, Patient Assisted Travel Scheme every five (5) years.

The following measures are to be used for reporting state wide and at regional level:

- Number of patients accessing PATS
- Number and cost of PATS trips
- Number and cost of PATS trips by subsidy type
- Number and cost of PATS trips by specialty
- Number of PATS trips for metro, intraregional, interregional and interstate travel
- Number and proportion of exceptional rulings requested and approved
- Consumer feedback
- Workforce feedback
- Stakeholder feedback
- Annual random audit of patients claims/rebates conducted by the Program Manager.

8. Standards

[National Safety and Quality Healthcare Standards](#) : 2.3, 2.10

9. Legislation

[Privacy Act 1988](#) (Cwlth)

[Freedom of Information Act 1992](#) (WA)

10. Related Policy Documents

WACHS [Patient Assisted Travel Scheme - Exceptional Ruling Guideline](#)

11. Related WA Health System Policies

[MP0050/17 Elective Surgery Access and Waiting List Management Policy.](#)

[OD0589/15 WA Health Complaint Management Policy](#)

[MP0010/16 Patient Confidentiality Policy](#)

[MP0002/16 Patient information Retention and Disposal Schedule Policy](#)

12. Policy Framework

[Financial Management](#)

13. Appendix

Appendix 1 - [PATs Application Process](#)

**This document can be made available in alternative formats
on request for a person with a disability**

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Appendix 1

A PATS Application has 12 months validity from date of first appointment for same specialist or speciality

