

## Media Release - The Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme report

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### Ombudsman presents report on Queensland Health's administration of the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme

7 June 2017

Queensland Ombudsman Phil Clarke today presented *The Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme report: An investigation into the administration of the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme by Queensland Health* to the Honourable Peter Wellington MP, Speaker of the Queensland Parliament for tabling.

The Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme (PTSS) provides travel and accommodation subsidies to patients required to travel more than 50km from their nearest hospital to attend specialist medical appointments. The Ombudsman's investigation found that despite Queensland Health (QH) conducting four reviews or audits of the PTSS since 2010, which identified problems and proposed solutions, it had failed to implement necessary reforms.

The investigation was initiated after complaints were received from regional, rural and remote patients about inequities and inconsistencies in their access to the scheme or the amount of subsidy approved across the State's 16 Hospital and Health Services (HHSs).

The investigation found that the PTSS application process is overly burdensome and some patients reported significant delays in receiving financial reimbursement. As a result, some patients incurred considerable expense and sometimes financial hardship.

Mr Clarke has recommended that QH determine which of the issues and recommendations from its own reviews and audits are outstanding and develop a plan with a timeframe for implementation.

Over three financial years, QH is projected to have spent \$230 million on the PTSS. The findings of the QH 2016 audit suggests there is a lack of understanding about how funding is allocated, spent by HHSs and whether the scheme is operating efficiently.

"The PTSS provides valuable support to thousands of regional, rural and remote Queenslanders by subsidising access to essential specialist medical treatment they may not otherwise have been able to access" said Mr Clarke.

"It is important that QH improves the administration of the PTSS so that all Queensland residents receive equitable access to high quality healthcare irrespective of where they live."

The Director-General of QH has accepted the Ombudsman's recommendation and advised that an implementation plan will be prepared.

The Queensland Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Parliament.

The Ombudsman ensures public agencies make fair and balanced decisions for Queenslanders by investigating complaints and conducting own-initiative investigations that tackle broader, systemic concerns.

The Ombudsman can investigate complaints about state government departments, local councils and publicly-funded universities.

The Ombudsman can make recommendations to rectify unfair or unjust decisions and improve administrative practice.

View the full report: *The Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme Report: An investigation into the administration of the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme by Queensland Health*

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