

MEDIA RELEASE

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Modest PTSS increase underlines the need for significant investment in public hospitals and specialists

The need for more public hospital funding and a workforce plan is even more urgent, after the state government announced a modest increase to the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme.

The fuel subsidy component of the PTSS is set to rise from 34 to 45 cents per kilometre in Tuesday's state budget.

Red tape will also be reduced to allow faster claims processing, but the government has not increased the accommodation subsidy, which will remain at \$70 per night.

AMA Queensland President Associate Professor Erica Gannon said it was a mixed result for patients.

"AMA Queensland has been calling for an increase in the PTSS given current cost-of-living pressures," she said.

"This modest lift is welcome, but for many patients it won't feel like enough, particularly without a rise in the accommodation payment."

Assoc Prof Gannon said it showed the need to increase services at public hospitals, so more people can get the treatment they need closer to home.

"While there will always be some highly specialised treatments that can only be delivered in our large metropolitan hospitals, rural Queenslanders are having to travel for services that should be available in their local regional public hospital," she said.

"Too many patients are having to travel for common surgeries like orthopaedics, urology and general surgery.

"Queensland Health's own data also shows thousands of patients are having to travel just to see a public specialist.

"Without more specialists in our public hospitals, patients will continue to be forced to travel at great cost to them, their families and potentially their health.

"The government must release its workforce plan to show how it is going to get the 6000 doctors we need by the Olympics."

As an example of referrals, Queensland Health data shows nearly 3300 patients based in Hervey Bay had to be referred to other hospitals as at 1 March alone, including nearly 2200 to Metro North Hospital and Health Service in Brisbane.

Over 1600 Bundaberg patients also had to be sent elsewhere, including 1158 to Brisbane.

AMA Queensland looks forward to seeing the budget papers and the government's plans for our health system on Tuesday.