Patient Assisted Travel Scheme Policy

1. Purpose

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

The intent of the PATS is to address variability in health outcomes, service access and equity for country people by providing financial subsidies to eligible country residents to access eligible specialist medical services not available locally.

This policy, PATS Handbook and PATS Administration Manual describe eligibility criteria, business processes and responsibilities of WACHS staff and recipients receiving a financial subsidy through the scheme; including eligible support persons. It includes the Exceptional Management process describes the process for exceptional rulings and exceptional endorsements.

PATS is an intrastate scheme, however, financial subsidies may be provided for travel to another state if the referral is to the nearest specialist and all other PATS criteria are met.

2. Policy

PATS provides a financial subsidy towards travel and accommodation expenses to eligible permanent residents of a WACHS region and their eligible support person, 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 Administration Manual

The PATS Administration Manual supports this policy providing assistance to PATS staff to consistently deliver the PATS Program across all WACHS regions by outlining business processes, accountabilities and detailed decision making support.

2.2 PATS Handbook

The PATS Handbook 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.

2.3 Exceptional Management Processes

The PATS Exceptional Management Process (under development) supports this policy by providing assistance to PATS staff to consistently deliver the PATS Program across all WACHS regions by outlining the Exceptional Endorsement and Exceptional Ruling processes. All decisions made under the Exceptional Management Processes do not form precedents. They enable fair and equitable decisions to be made based on individual circumstances.

Exceptional Endorsement

Exceptional endorsements are for when an applicant meets PATS core eligibility criteria but requests a subsidy that is over and above a staff members delegation as per the PATS Delegation Schedule (under development).

Exceptional Ruling

An exceptional ruling is a decision made by the delegated authority as per the WACHS Authorisation Schedule (Section 11) when an applicant has applied for PATS and meets the intent of the scheme, but not the parameters of the PATS policy.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The **PATS 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.

The **Regional Executive Directors** are responsible for:

- providing leadership on PATS administration within the region including managing the PATS regional budget
- making decisions on exceptional rulings
- approving expenditure for PATS as per the WACHS Authorisation Schedule.

The **Regional Medical Directors/delegates** are responsible for:

- providing clinical leadership in regards to PATS applications and claims within the region
- making clinical decisions on exceptional endorsements.

The **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
- reviewing and approving exceptional endorsements that are within the PATS Regional Coordinator delegation as per the WACHS Authorisation Schedule
- escalating applications that fall within the exceptional management process to the WACHS PATS Regional Medical Director/delegate or WACHS Regional Executive Director where applicable
- responding to complaints from consumers and other key regional stakeholders
- communicating and marketing PATS to all key stakeholders within 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 within the region
- monitoring and reviewing PATS performance trends within the region.

The **PATS Clerks** are responsible for:
- assisting clients through the application process including providing all the required forms and information related to PATS eligibility
- reviewing all forms received to ensure they are completed correctly and in full
- liaising 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
- liaising with the relevant staff at hospitals and health services to assist clients with travel and accommodation bookings upon being discharged from hospital
- using 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
- liaising with travel and accommodation providers for, the issue of credit notes and account queries
- calculating reimbursements for approved claims for travel and accommodation assistance
- inputting all necessary information into the PATS database, including approved and declined claims
- escalating applications that fall within the exceptional management process to the WACHS PATS Regional Coordinator where applicable. Ensuring all relevant information is included
- verifying patient attendance at appointments
- assisting with training and review of PATS processes within the region

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

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

4.1 Monitoring

Monitoring of compliance to this policy is to be undertaken by:
- Reviewing and reporting of performance data as per audit schedule, including:
  - PATS approvals according to Authorisation Schedule
  - Adherence to Exception Management Process (under development)
  - Percentage of PATS staff completing PATS training modules
  - PATS applications are approved in accordance with the PATS Administration Manual
- Monitoring volume of applications requiring exception management processes

4.2 Evaluation

Evaluation of this policy is to be carried out by the WACHS PATS Program Manager, every two (2) years. The following evaluation measures will be used:
- Policy compliance, as per monitoring activities above, including
  - Approvals completed as per WACHS Authorisation Schedule

- PATS applications are approved in accordance with the PATS Administration Manual

5. Compliance

This policy is a mandatory requirement under the Health Services Act .

Failure to comply with this Patient Assisted Travel Scheme Policy may constitute a breach of the WA Health Code of Conduct (Code). The Code is part of the Integrity Policy Framework issued pursuant to Section 26 of the *Health Services Act 2016* 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.

WACHS staff are reminded that compliance with all policies and procedures is mandatory.

6. References

Government of Western Australia, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-primary-industries-and-regional-development

WA Country Health Service, https://www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au/

WA Country Health Service, Patient Assisted Travel Scheme, https://www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au/Our-patients/Patient-Assisted-Travel-Scheme-PATS

WA Country Health Service, Authorisation Schedule https://wahealthdept.sharepoint.com/sites/wachs-oce/SitePages/WA-Country-Health-Service-Authorisation-Schedule.aspx

WA Health Department, WA Country Health Service, https://wahealthdept.sharepoint.com/sites/wachs

WA Health Department, WA Country Health Service, Innovation and Development, Patient Assisted Travel Scheme, https://wahealthdept.sharepoint.com/sites/wachs-innovation-development/SitePages/Patient-Assisted-Travel-Scheme.aspx

7. Definitions

Term	Definition
Patient Assisted Travel Scheme	Addresses variability in health outcomes, service access and equity for country people by providing financial subsidies to eligible country residents to access eligible medical services not available locally.
Royalties for Regions	Underpins the State Governments long-term commitment to developing Western Australia regional areas into strong and vibrant regional communities.
Country Health Innovation	All WA Country Health Service recurrent programs and activities funded by Royalties for Regions have been

	consolidated into the Country Health Innovation program. The objectives of the Country Health Innovation program are to continue to improve health outcomes and delivery of health services to regional Western Australians to enable quality, accessible health services.

8. Document Summary

Coverage	WACHS wide
Audience	Regional Medical Directors, Regional Executive Directors, PATS staff.
Records Management	Non Clinical: Corporate Recordkeeping Compliance Policy
Related Legislation	• *Privacy Act 1988* (Cwlth) • Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA)
Related Mandatory Policies / Frameworks	• MP 0066/17 Acceptable Use of Information and Communications Technology Policy • MP 0124/19 Code of Conduct Policy • MP0130/20 Complaints Management Policy • MP1069/21 Elective Services Access and Management Policy • Financial Management Framework • MP 0015/16 Information Access, Use and Disclosure Policy • MP0144/20 Information Retention and Disposal Policy
Related WACHS Policy Documents	Nil
Other Related Documents	• PATS Administration Manual • PATS Handbook • WACHS Authorisation Schedule • DoH Interstate Patient Travel Scheme (IPTS) Policy Document
Related Forms	• PATS Application Form(s) (under development) • Inter Hospital Patient Transfer Form (under development)
Related Training Packages	PATSOFF EL2
Aboriginal Health Impact Statement Declaration (ISD)	ISD Record ID: 2386
National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards	2.06, 1.15
Aged Care Quality Standards	N/A
National Standards for Mental Health Services	N/A

9. Document Control

Version	Published date	Current from	Summary of changes
2.00	2 November 2023	2 November 2023	• removal of references to medical practitioners. • addition of WACHS Regional Medical Directors role in the new process • updated roles and responsibilities to reflect the new process • reference to the Exceptional Management process added

10. Approval

Policy Owner	Executive Director Strategy, Service Development and Innovation
Co-approver	Nil
Contact	PATS Program Manager
Business Unit	Outpatient Reform and Access
EDRMS #	ED-CO-19-16339

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.