

**Submission
No 598**

**INQUIRY INTO HEALTH OUTCOMES AND ACCESS TO
HEALTH AND HOSPITAL SERVICES IN RURAL,
REGIONAL AND REMOTE NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Mr David Moran
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Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to what I consider to be a much needed enquiry.

I would like to see the IPTAAS scheme overhauled with a view to make it more easily accessible and simpler for both claimant and professionals to use as well as increasing the amount of benefit available.

I have a number of rare and complex medical conditions that (prior to covid) require several visits to Sydney every year. I am legally blind, single and relatively independent , as much as possible. Therefore I am responsible for completing and lodging any IPTAAS claims myself. Even though my medical conditions are lifelong and my visits to Sydney will be ongoing for the rest of my life, I still have to go through the same processes to lodge a claim for IPTAAS every time,(unless it falls within a very short timeframe).

I understand the need to ensure claims are legitimate but there has to be a better way than the present one.

As you can imagine, having to travel to Sydney for medical appointments is stressful enough without the added stress of trying to organise the required paper work for IPTAAS. I often feel guilty and a nuisance for having to ask very busy Dr's to complete the forms and make the phone calls that are required for me to make a claim. This task becomes even more complicated when you are in hospital and trying to make the necessary arrangements. One particular part of the process which I believe desperately needs to be looked at is the process of claiming for air travel. In 2021 air travel is fairly common, especially between regional areas and major cities yet IPTAAS seems to view it as some kind of luxury that should only be used in very few circumstances.

As mentioned earlier I am legally blind as well as having many other conditions that make flying the only real option for me to travel long distances. My condition/s will only worsen over time, yet every time I lodge an IPTAAS claim I have to visit my GP and very meekly ask him to not just fill out a form but also to take the time out of an extremely busy day to phone a lay person and explain to them why it is necessary for me to fly to Sydney to attend my medical appointments.

It is 2021, why is air travel frowned upon as a reasonable means of transport ? It seems ludicrous to me that an extremely busy Dr has to phone someone working in an office with no idea about my medical conditions or physical abilities, to seek approval for their patient to claim for air travel. I believe it is a no-brainer that the Dr should be able to decide whether their patient has a legitimate reason to use air travel, OR PREFERABLY air travel should be treated the same as any other means of transportation when making a claim. Often it costs around the same as rail or car anyway.

Air travel should actually be encouraged not discouraged for people travelling from rural areas for several other reasons.

- It would mean less country traffic on city roads.
- It would be safer because you remove the need for tired and stressed drivers trying to navigate busy and unfamiliar streets after a day or days driving.
- It would remove a huge onus from the patient in the days before attending what is usually already a very stressful appointment.
- It would remove the need to see a GP for a non urgent, non medical appointment when it is extremely difficult to get an appointment anyway thus freeing up time for patients with a more pressing need to see the GP.

When I made enquiries about the current process a while ago I was told, "but it doesn't have to be your GP that makes the phone call, it can be their admin staff", That may seem ok in theory but it's not very practical. I have complex and rare medical conditions that even many Dr's don't have an understanding of, so how is one office worker meant to explain to another office worker why it is necessary for me to be approved for air travel?

I also believe the current rate of reimbursement is extremely inadequate particularly the amount for accommodation. Patients don't travel to Sydney to see Specialists because they want to, it's because they HAVE to because of the lack of Specialists in rural areas. So, not only are rural patients having to cope with the emotional and often physical difficulty of travelling to Sydney for access to medical care but they have the added worry of trying to pay for it.

Please consider changes to help patients in rural areas access the specialised medical care we require.