

Transport for Health - IPTAAS - Guidelines for Medical Practitioners & Specialists

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Summary The Guidelines provide information for referring medical practitioners and treating specialists about the criteria and administrative requirements for the Transport for Health - Isolated Patients' Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme.

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TRANSPORT FOR HEALTH – IPTAAS – GUIDELINES FOR MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS & SPECIALISTS

PURPOSE

The Guidelines for Medical Practitioners & Specialists provide information about the criteria and administrative requirements for the Isolated Patient Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS).

IPTAAS is a subsidy program that provides financial assistance to patients and eligible escorts travelling more than 100km each way to attend an appointment with their nearest medical specialist.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Referring practitioners and treating specialists must follow the Guidelines when completing the claimant's IPTAAS Application Form and understand the eligibility criteria for patients and escorts claiming IPTAAS.

USE OF THE GUIDELINE

Referring practitioners and treating specialists are responsible for:

- following and implementing the Guidelines for Medical Practitioners & Specialists.
- providing information on Transport for Health IPTAAS to verify
 - The nearest specialist criteria relating to the patient's treatment is satisfied,
 - There is a need for an escort for the patient,
 - Whether travel by air is medically necessary rather than private vehicle or other public transport travel.

Categories of health practitioners are detailed on page 10 of the guidelines.

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Amendment notes
August 2007 (GL2007_015)	Deputy Director- General Strategic Development	Make available the existing Guidelines in an electronic form.
July 2009 (GL2009_012)	Deputy Director- General Strategic Development	Updated to reflect NSW Government's decision to abolish the \$20 patient co-contribution for pensioners and health care card holders (under Caring Together - The Health Action Plan for NSW)

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

1. Transport for Health – IPTAAS – Guidelines for Medical Practitioners & Specialists

NSW Transport for Health

**Isolated Patients' Travel and Accommodation Assistance
Scheme**

(Transport for Health - IPTAAS)

**Guidelines for Medical Practitioners and
Specialists**

**“Transport for Health establishes a policy framework to assist
NSW Health to simplify
and improve patient access to health services”**

July 2009

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This document replaces NSW Isolated Patients' Travel and Accommodation Scheme (IPTAAS) Guidelines for Medical Practitioners and Specialists ISBN 0 7349 3194 9 SHPN (CSP) 000104, which existed in hard copy only

July 2009

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Introduction

Transport for Health

Access to and from health facilities is often difficult for 'transport disadvantaged' people who cannot use or have difficulty in accessing public and/or private transport. Transport disadvantaged people are more likely to be those also experiencing the greatest socio-economic and health disadvantage, or who live in rural and/or isolated communities. This in turn affects NSW Health's ability to reduce the gap between those people in the community with the best and poorest health.

Transport for Health establishes a policy framework to assist NSW Health to simplify and improve patient access to health services. It integrates all non-emergency health related transport service provision throughout NSW Area Health Services into one program. These services are delivered by a variety of transport providers, with support from a range of government agencies, and include integration of the former programs:

- Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS),
- Community Transport,
- Inter-facility transport,
- Statewide Infant Screening-Hearing (SWISH) Travel Assistance Scheme,
- Services funded under the former Transport for Health program.

Transport for Health is aimed at supporting Area Health Services to be more strategic in identifying, consolidating and integrating a full range of transport services and resources to increase efficiencies and reduce duplication. It will do this through the creation of Health Transport Units within each Area Health Service that will:

1. Act as the central point of contact within the Area Health Service for responding to health transport issues; and
2. Provide a formal channel of communication between the Area Health Service and health transport stakeholders in order to achieve better collaboration in the planning and provision of improved patient transport solutions.

Transport for Health – Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS)

The Transport for Health – Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) recognises that people in isolated and rural communities experience particular difficulties in their ability to access specialist medical treatment. IPTAAS aims to reduce the impact of this disadvantage on the health of individuals and communities.

Transport for Health - IPTAAS is one component of a comprehensive approach to addressing the transport needs of patients who are disadvantaged by distance and isolation. The focus of Transport for Health - IPTAAS is on patients who are able to use public or private transport but are disadvantaged by the distances they need to travel to access specialist treatment not available locally. The aim of the Scheme is to provide short-term direct financial assistance to patients and their escorts (if required) to assist with the costs associated with this travel.

Transport for Health - IPTAAS is a subsidy scheme. It provides assistance with the cost of travel and accommodation where the patient needs to travel more than 100km (each way) to access

specialist care. The cost of meals and incidental expenses such as parking and booking fees are not reimbursable. All eligible persons must make a contribution towards each claim, excluding pensioners and health care card holders.

The requirement that eligible persons make a contribution towards each claim is based on equity considerations and the recognition that persons living within the 100 km distance limit for assistance under Transport for Health - IPTAAS also incur travelling and accommodation expenses in accessing similar specialist medical treatment.

About these Guidelines

These guidelines provide information for referring medical practitioners¹ and treating specialists about the criteria and administrative requirements for the Transport for Health – IPTAAS.

In particular, it provides detailed information on:

- The eligibility criteria for Transport for Health – IPTAAS,
- The requirement to refer to the nearest treating specialist and the referral process for Transport for Health – IPTAAS,
- Situations where approval of an escort under Transport for Health - IPTAAS may be appropriate, including a list of the medical reasons where provision of an escort may be appropriate,
- Situations where approval of air travel under Transport for Health - IPTAAS is appropriate, including a list of the medical reasons that may make air travel appropriate and details of the process for obtaining approval for a patient (and escort if applicable) to travel by air.

Transport for Health - IPTAAS Objectives and Target Groups

Transport for Health - IPTAAS is a patient assistance and partial reimbursement scheme that provides direct financial assistance to people in isolated and remote areas of NSW who have to travel more than 100km (one way) to access the nearest specialist for treatment.

The objective of Transport for Health - IPTAAS is to improve accessibility to specialist medical treatment and oral surgical health care (excluding routine dental work) for people without access to these services in their local community.

Transport for Health - IPTAAS relies on the information provided by the referring medical practitioner to verify that:

- The nearest specialist criteria relating to the patient's treatment is satisfied,
- There is a need for an escort for the patient,
- Whether travel by air is medically necessary rather than private vehicle or other public transport travel.

Transport for Health - IPTAAS is a subsidy scheme, not a full reimbursement scheme. It provides limited financial assistance for actual costs associated with travel and accommodation.

¹ For Transport for Health - IPTAAS purposes, 'referring medical practitioner' includes medical practitioners, optometrists and accredited dental practitioners as outlined later in these guidelines.

Eligibility Criteria

The primary eligibility criteria for Transport for Health - IPTAAS are as follows:

- The patient must be a permanent resident of New South Wales,
- The patient must reside more than 100km (one way) from the nearest treating specialist,
- The patient must be referred to the nearest treating specialist for treatment unless the referring practitioner deems it medically beneficial for the patient to access a further specialist (for more detail refer to section on Exemption to the Nearest Specialist Ruling),
- Treatment is not part of a workers compensation, damages or third-party claim,
- If the patient is eligible they must claim the maximum available benefits from their private health fund
- The patient is not eligible for assistance under any other government-funded program.

More information on the eligibility criteria for Transport for Health - IPTAAS is provided in the Transport for Health - IPTAAS application form and in the Transport for Health Information Guide for Patients and their Carers. A copy of the Transport for Health - IPTAAS application form and Information Guide should be provided to all patients who may be eligible to claim for assistance under Transport for Health - IPTAAS.

Patients who think they may be eligible to apply for assistance under Transport for Health - IPTAAS should contact their nearest Transport for Health - Health Transport Unit to clarify their eligibility prior to travelling.

Forms and other Transport for Health publications can be obtained from:

- Area Health Service Health Transport Units (see back of this booklet for contact details)
- www.health.nsw.gov.au/living/transport/index.html
- Better Health Centre – Publications Warehouse (Tel: 02 9816 0452)

Exclusions from Transport for Health - IPTAAS

Benefits are not payable under Transport for Health - IPTAAS for:

- General medical treatment given by general practitioners and allied health professionals such as psychologists, physiotherapists and speech pathologists,
- General dentistry such as dental extractions,
- Inter-hospital transfers,
- Travel by ambulance, air ambulance or any other form of emergency transport,
- Travel or accommodation costs where benefits may be or have been provided through the Department of Veterans' Affairs (Repatriation Transport Scheme), other Commonwealth or State Government schemes, State and Employer Schemes, damages, insurance and workers compensation claims,
- Hospital-related costs, including public or private hospital inpatient accommodation costs,
- Specialist medical and/or oral health surgical treatment for injury or illness incurred during business or recreational travel.

Patients who require general medical or dental treatment and need financial assistance with travel costs to access these services should be referred to alternative forms of assistance with the Area Health Service (such as Community Transport). Further information on other transport options is available from Transport for Health-Health Transport Units in each Area Health Service.

Transport for Health - IPTAAS Application for Assistance Form

The Transport for Health - IPTAAS application form has four sections and a checklist

- Section A: Patient Details
- Section B: Referring Medical Practitioner Details
- Section C: Treating Specialist Details
- Section D: Patient and Escort Claim and Payment Details

Previous Section E has been deleted on the latest application form.

Section A: Patient Details

- Should be completed by/on behalf of the patient BEFORE the referring medical practitioner completes the form.

Section B: Referring Medical Practitioners Details

- Should be completed by the referring practitioner or their authorised representative (eg registrar, intern, NUM) prior to the patient's forward journey (allied health professionals do not qualify to complete this),
- Section B must be completed by the referring medical practitioner for the first referral and twelve months from the first date of referral if the treatment is continuing. For treatment in the intervening period, the treating specialist can complete Section B,
- The referring medical practitioner must provide full contact details and relevant information concerning the medical condition of the patient,
- Requests for escorts and/or air travel should be based solely on medical criteria, as outlined later in these guidelines,
- Application forms will be returned to the patient where the information provided in this section is incomplete or missing,
- All information, except the certifying signature is to be printed,
- Section B should not be signed by anyone other than the referring medical practitioner.

Section C: Treating Specialist Details

- Should be completed by the treating specialist or their authorised representative (registrar, intern, NUM) prior to the patient's return journey (allied health professionals do not qualify to complete this),
- If the patient is attending a block of treatment, the treating specialist must fill out the start and end date of treatment (section C question 3). Further verification of actual appointment dates is required if the patient will be returning home on weekends and claiming multiple return journeys - see Block Treatment and Travel Diary on next page,

- The treating specialist must provide full contact details and relevant information concerning the treatment provided and the medical condition of the patient,
- If the patient is to remain near the location of the specialist outside the appointment date/s (eg for further tests), the treating specialist must verify this (Section C question 5),
- Requests for escorts and/or air travel should be based solely on medical criteria as outlined later in these guidelines,
- Transport for Health - IPTAAS application forms will be returned to the patient where the information provided in this section is incomplete/not provided,
- All information except the certifying signature is to be printed,
- If an authorised representative completes the form, the treating specialist/registrar must still sign the form to verify that the information provided is correct.

Section D: Patient and Escort Claim and Payment Details

- Should be completed by/on behalf of the patient before the application form is submitted,
- The form needs to be signed and submitted by the patient and/or their guardian,
- Travel Diary Supplement can be attached for patients attending a block of treatment.

Block Treatment – Travel Diary Supplement

Block treatment refers to situations such as an oncology patient receiving radiotherapy over a period of five weeks. The procedure for claims relating to block treatment is outlined below:

- One claim only per block treatment to be submitted where there is verification of the multiple appointments by the treating specialist or an authorised representative.
- Verification of appointments can be via; a letter from the treating specialist with appointments listed; OR an appointment schedule from the particular clinic signed by the treating specialist or an authorised representative; OR an attached single page Travel Diary Supplement (obtained from Area Health Service – Health Transport Units) with the appointment dates listed and signed by the treating specialist. Patients can also use the Travel Diary to record details of multiple journeys associated with attending the appointments comprising the treatment block. A completed IPTAAS application form must also be submitted with original copies of receipts and tickets for travel expenses.
- The exception to reimbursement of costs for travel home on weekends is where the patient travels by air. In this case, patients who travel home by air for weekends during block treatment will be reimbursed at the standard fuel subsidy rate only.
- Reimbursement of commercial accommodation costs will only be for those nights the patient stays in commercial accommodation during the period of treatment. Patients cannot claim for accommodation costs while they are at home over the weekends.
- However, commercial accommodation costs will be reimbursed if a patient chooses to remain near the place of treatment, rather than travel home, over weekends.

Referrals under Transport for Health - IPTAAS

Referral to a Specialist

A person seeking assistance must be referred for treatment by one of the following categories of health practitioners:

- A medical practitioner to a specialist or consultant physician for items listed in the Commonwealth Medical Benefits Schedule Handbook,
- An optometrist to an ophthalmologist for items listed in the Commonwealth Medical Benefits Schedule Handbook,
- An accredited dental practitioner to a specialist or consultant physician for oral surgery conducted in an operating theatre of an approved hospital and listed in the Commonwealth Medicare Benefits for Services in the Dental Practitioners Handbook (refer to definition section),
- An accredited dental practitioner to a specialist or consultant physician for orthodontic and associated dental treatment rendered by an Accredited Dental Practitioner where the patient is registered as a cleft lip and palate patient and the treatment is listed in the Commonwealth Medicare Benefits for the Treatment of Cleft Lip and Cleft Palate Conditions Handbook.

Specialist status

For Transport for Health - IPTAAS purposes, a specialist is defined as:

- A medical practitioner who is recognised as a specialist or consultant physician in a particular specialty for the purposes of the Health Insurance Act 1973,
- A dental practitioner registered as an oral surgeon and contracted to render oral surgery in the operating theatre of a hospital established under the Health insurance Act 1973.

For Transport for Health - IPTAAS purposes, specialist oral health surgical treatment includes:

- Treatment by an accredited dental practitioner who is a specialist or consultant physician for oral surgery conducted in an operating theatre of an approved hospital and listed in the Commonwealth Medicare Benefits for Services by Dental Practitioners Handbook,
- Orthodontic and associated dental treatment where the patient is registered as a cleft lip and palate patient and the treatment is listed in the Commonwealth Medicare Benefits for the Treatment of Cleft Lip and Cleft palate Conditions Handbook.

Specialists must be registered on the Commonwealth Register of Medical Practitioners (CROMP) to be recognised as a specialist. Specialists must be registered on the Health Insurance Commission Medicare Provider File to be recognised as a specialist, except as may otherwise be provided for by this Procedures Manual. Enquiries concerning specialist recognition are to be directed to the Health Insurance Commission. Medical practitioners (including registrars) employed as specialists by the Commonwealth or State or by an approved hospital must provide written confirmation of their specialist status from the relevant agency or facility.

Medical practitioners (including registrars) employed as specialists by the Commonwealth or State or by the proprietors of an approved hospital are deemed to be specialists for Transport for Health - IPTAAS purposes. Confirmation of specialist status will be required.

Specialist status may be conferred on general practitioners in rural areas who are recognised by Area Health Service Chief Executives as being appropriately qualified and trained to undertake sexual assault medical examinations.

Peer Recognition

Peer recognition does not constitute a ground to confer specialist status under the scheme, particularly where this status might be bestowed on a non-medical practitioner. Peer recognition is not sufficient to confer specialist status. Only medical practitioners (including registrars) employed as specialists will be accepted for Transport for Health - IPTAAS purposes.

Nearest Treating Specialist

Patients seeking assistance under Transport for Health - IPTAAS are required to attend the nearest specialist in a particular specialty/sub-specialty. For Transport for Health - IPTAAS purposes, the nearest specialist is defined as the specialist in a particular specialty closest to where the patient usually resides.

Transport for Health - IPTAAS is not obliged to reimburse costs where the patient/referring medical practitioner chooses to bypass the nearest treating specialist. To clarify where the nearest treating specialist is located and/or if there is a visiting specialist available, please contact the Transport for Health-Health Transport Unit in the patients Area Health Service.

This includes specialists who provide Outreach, "Fly In - Fly Out" or visiting services. The nearest specialist is defined as the specialist in a particular specialty closest to where the patient usually resides. State borders are not relevant in considering the nearest specialist for the Scheme's purposes.

Exemption to the Nearest Specialist Ruling

Exemption from the nearest specialist ruling may be granted where:

- The referring doctor certifies that a patient's medical condition requires a type of specialist service that is available locally, but after taking into account the clinical appropriateness of the nearest specialist, the urgency of the referral, the waiting time for treatment and the patient's capacity to pay for the service, decides to refer the patient to a more distant specialist
- The nearest specialist certifies that referral to a more distant specialist in an unrelated specialty is required on medical grounds.

Claims where a specialist in a particular specialty refers a patient to another specialist in the same or a related specialty are deemed to have met the "nearest specialist" criteria. There is no additional requirement to be met under this section except where 'family support' is provided as the valid medical reason.

Family support may be a valid medical reason for bypassing the nearest specialist when assessed in conjunction with the gravity and duration of treatment and where there is demonstrated clinical advantage in treatment and recovery. In this case, the nearest specialist

must certify that family support will provide a clinical advantage for a patient's treatment and recovery. Travel and accommodation assistance is payable at usual rates.

A claim where a patient's doctor rather than the nearest specialist cites 'family support' as a medical reason for bypassing the nearest specialist should be assessed in the usual manner with all requirements regarding nearness of specialist initially considered.

Visiting specialists and registrars

A visiting specialist or Registrar who is employed as a specialist in a public or private hospital is deemed to be the nearest specialist. While individuals are free to exercise discretion in attending a preferred specialist or service, it is considered reasonable to ensure that the public funds used for Transport for Health - IPTAAS are directed towards recognised specialist medical treatment and confined to travel for access to clinically appropriate services that are not available locally or within the Area Health Service.

Second specialist opinion

A patient who is referred by their nearest specialist to another specialist for a second opinion is considered to be eligible for assistance in terms of this eligibility requirement.

Interstate referrals

Residents of NSW (including metropolitan areas) who need to travel interstate to access specialist medical treatment or specialist surgical oral health services not available in NSW are eligible to apply for assistance.

Inquiries concerning travel and accommodation assistance for interstate residents should be referred to the relevant Health authority in the State/Territory in which the patient resides. Contact details for interstate patient travel assistance schemes are listed in Appendix 1.

Referrals to specialised services

A patient who is referred to a specialist health care service where the primary purpose for referral is for consultation with a medical specialist providing specialised treatment not available locally, may also be eligible for assistance under Transport for Health - IPTAAS. Such specialised treatment may include Rivendell and Redbank (mental health services for children), Royal Far West Health Scheme, and the Spastic Centre of NSW.

Children attending Rivendell, Redbank or Royal Far West may also be eligible for assistance with travel and accommodation costs from other government or non-government organisations.

Subsequent Specialist Appointments and Ongoing Specialist Medical Treatment

Where subsequent visits to the same specialist are required for continuing treatment the treating specialist may be regarded as the referring medical practitioner. The exception is where a patient has not seen the treating specialist within the past twelve months. In this instance, the referring medical practitioner must complete Section B of the Transport for Health - IPTAAS application form.

Referrals from a medical practitioner for ongoing specialist medical treatment must be provided on a twelve-monthly basis and the referring practitioner must fill in Section B of the application form.

Escorts

Definition of an Escort

- The provision of an escort under Transport for Health - IPTAAS must be based primarily on medical or medically related need,
- For Transport for Health - IPTAAS purposes, an escort is defined as a person who is required to be with a patient for specific medical reasons,
- Patients who are 17 years of age or under are eligible for an escort, irrespective of their medical condition,
- Escorts should be adults and able to cope with the special medical needs of the patient,
- Assistance with travel and accommodation costs for an escort under Transport for Health - IPTAAS is always conditional on the patient's eligibility for assistance under Transport for Health - IPTAAS (see section on eligibility criteria), i.e. if the patient is not eligible for assistance under Transport for Health - IPTAAS, the escort will not be eligible for assistance either.

Use of Escorts under Transport for Health - IPTAAS

As the use of escorts significantly adds to the cost of Transport for Health - IPTAAS, it is important that their necessity is confirmed on medical grounds in Section B by the referring practitioner or their authorised representative or in Section C by the treating specialist or authorised representative.

Need for an Escort During Travel

Financial assistance with travel may be paid in respect of an escort where the referring medical practitioner or treating specialist determines that it is medically necessary for an escort to accompany the patient during travel.

The referring medical practitioner or treating specialist should provide certification of the need for an escort during travel on the application form.

Failure to cite the medical reason may result in non-reimbursement of escort costs to the patient.

Criteria for Approval of Medical Escort

The clinical criteria to guide referring medical practitioners and/or treating specialists in considering and certifying the need for an escort are:

Clinical criteria for approval of an escort	
A guide to the clinical reasons for referring medical practitioners and/or treating specialists to approve an escort (relative, friend or carer) to accompany an eligible patient during travel and/or remain with the patient during treatment is outlined below. If the doctor or specialist considers that there is a valid medical reason for an escort, which is not covered by the clinical criteria listed, the specific details must be provided.	
Impairment	Patient with cognitive impairment, including acquired brain injury, dementia and confusion.
Active role of carer	Where the carer is responsible for the patient's medical treatment (renal dialysis, catheterising, and administering of treatment) or personal care needs in the case of patients with quadriplegia or multiple sclerosis.
Involvement in medical treatment	Where a partner is required for part of the procedure, including fertility treatments, organ donor/transplants.
Children	Patients under 17 years of age are automatically entitled to one escort. Two escorts may be considered if the child's condition is considered life threatening.
Support person	Where an escort is required to support the patient during long-term specialist outpatient medical treatment (radiotherapy), and/or in decision-making about cancer treatments or major procedures, and/or for cultural reasons such as in the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and persons from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.
As an alternative to air travel	Where taking an escort is an alternative to air travel, for example, where the patient has visual or hearing impairment or a mental illness, such as schizophrenia, psychosis or severe depressive disorder.

If the referring medical practitioner or treating specialist considers that there is a valid medical reason for an escort not covered by the clinical criteria listed above, then specific details must be provided.

Escort Contribution

Escorts are required to pay a mandatory contribution fee (currently \$40 where separate costs are incurred by the escort e.g. separate accommodation or travelling by means other than a private motor vehicle). The exceptions to this are as follows:

- The patient is a child under the age of 17 years and is accompanied by an escort, only one contribution is payable
- There is no personal contribution required if the patient and escort are pensioners and/or health care card holders

Accommodation Benefits

Financial assistance towards accommodation costs associated with a claimant's travel to attend specialist medical appointments will be considered in the following circumstances:

- The referring medical practitioner or treating specialist certifies that in-transit commercial accommodation is required in cases of genuine medical need,
- Limitation of transport schedules means that the claimant needs to stay overnight prior to the specialist medical appointment or hospital admission and/or delay the return journey home. Costs such as late checkout fees or a tariff up to the daily accommodation benefit rate may also be claimed. Where specialist medical treatment is carried out on an outpatient basis (eg. radiotherapy, renal dialysis treatment/training).

Air Travel

Use of Air Travel

For air travel to be approved under Transport for Health – IPTAAS, there must be a valid medical reason for air travel for both the forward and/or return journeys. The referring medical practitioner or treating specialist must articulate the medical reason for air travel in their sections of the application form. If, during the period of treatment, air travel becomes necessary for clinical reasons, the relevant professional treating the patient at the time must seek approval and complete the relevant section of the form.

Under Transport for Health - IPTAAS, reimbursement of fares is calculated at economy surface level using rail or coach services (or at 15c/km using a private motor vehicle) unless the referring medical practitioner or treating specialist certifies that the patient has a specific medical condition that requires them to travel by air.

The referring practitioner or the treating specialist **must** obtain prior approval to authorise air travel from the Transport for Health - Health Transport Unit in the patient's Area Health Service.

The continuing need for air travel on subsequent visits must be considered, certified and approved on each occasion.

Approval for air travel is always conditional on patients meeting the primary eligibility criteria for Transport for Health - IPTAAS (see section on eligibility criteria).

Process for Obtaining Prior Approval for Air Travel

The referring doctor or specialist, or their authorised representative, must contact the Health Transport Unit for a **Prior Approval Number** and enter this number on the claim form. Failure to do so may result in non-reimbursement of travel costs or reimbursement at the equivalent of a private motor vehicle journey only. Lord Howe Island permanent residents are exempt from having to seek air travel approval.

If the medical reason for air travel is related to the patient's medical condition, the referring doctor can obtain prior approval for both the forward and return journeys simultaneously.

If there is a medical reason for the patient to make the **return journey** by air, the treating specialist will need to obtain prior approval for this trip.

Information requirements

The Health Transport Unit will require the following information for pre-approval:

- Patient details,
- Medical reason for air travel,
- Specialist details,
- Journey details, including the expected forward and return dates,
- Whether an escort is medically required.

This information should be provided to the Health Transport Unit either by phone or fax. The Health Transport Unit will advise the referring practitioner and/or treating specialist of the **prior approval number** for air travel by telephone or return fax. The prior approval number must be noted in the application form.

Criteria for Approval of Air Travel

The clinical criteria for approval of air travel guiding referring medical practitioners and/or treating specialists in considering and certifying the need for air travel are:	
Active clinical management	Patients with conditions that would be difficult to manage during prolonged road travel or if away longer than one day, including those requiring ambulatory oxygen, regular catheterisation by self/carer, frequent nebuliser therapy (less than four hourly) dialysis patients.
Pain management	Patients with severe pain that is likely to be worsened by prolonged sitting, including those experiencing post-operative pain (within two weeks of an operation) bony metastases, acute disc prolapse neck/back. Some patients with chronic back pain would be best transported by road where they can stop at regular intervals.
Urgency	Patients in urgent need of treatment or referral including patients called for organ transplant, those commencing chemotherapy/ radiotherapy/ dialysis and patients with sudden loss of vision eg. retinal detachment.
Restricted mobility	This includes patients with quadriplegia/ paraplegia/hemiplegia, and those requiring significant assistance with ambulation, which precludes other forms of transport.
Life threatening conditions	Potentially life-threatening conditions where a prolonged journey may compromise patient health include low-risk unstable angina pectoris (high risk patients would obviously be transferred by air ambulance and those with stable angina pectoris would not need to fly), unstable epilepsy indicated by frequent seizures, advanced pregnancy, and large aneurism requiring surgery.
Musculoskeletal instability	This includes patients for whom prolonged jolting/jarring may compromise their treatment outcome such as splinted fractures not already stabilised, tendon repair (pre-op) and prolapsed vertebral disc with neurological signs.

Responsibility for Booking Air Travel

It is the responsibility of the patient to arrange and pay for all tickets.

Advance purchases of the air ticket through a local travel agent may be considered and arranged through the Health Transport Unit where there are circumstances of demonstrated financial hardship. The criteria for determining cases of financial hardship include patients or guardians:

- In receipt of recognised pensions or benefits (e.g. a Healthcare Card) from the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services,
- Who has a weekly income equal to or less than the maximum equivalent pension

Advance payments for air travel can only be made where there is confirmation of limited financial capacity. It is the responsibility of the patient or guardian to provide evidence of limited financial capacity. Examples of proof may include:

- Current Pension/Healthcare Card,
- Statement by employer concerning average weekly income,
- Statement by social worker.

Patients or guardians wishing to apply for an advance payment must contact their Area Health Service Health Transport Unit to discuss the arrangements for advance payments.

Further Information

For further information about Transport for Health - IPTAAS, please contact the patient's Area Health Service - Health Transport Unit listed in Appendix 2, or visit the NSW Health Transport website at www.health.nsw.gov.au/living/transport.

All patient enquiries, requests for prior approval for air travel and completed forms should be forwarded to the patients home Area Health Service Transport for Health-Health Transport Units.

Area Health Services reserve the right to contact referring and treating medical practitioners and/or other service providers where substantiation of documentation is required.

Appendix 1

Australian, State and Territory Agency Contacts

Agency	Contact Details
Australian Department of Health and Ageing	ACT (02) 6289 1555 NSW (02) 9263 3795
Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs Repatriation Transport Scheme	NSW Office (02) 9213 7777 1800 113 304, Border town toll free: 1800 257 251
Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs Veterans' Affairs Network (VAN) Offices	<p>99 Phillip Street, Parramatta 2150 Phone: 9893 9892</p> <p>567 Hunter Street, Newcastle 2300 Phone: 4926 2733</p> <p>10 Moore Street, Canberra 2601 Phone: 6267 1411 or 1800 046 088</p> <p>43 Burrelli Street, Wollongong 2500 Phone: 4226 0190</p> <p>277 Mann Street, Gosford 2250 Phone: 4323 4945</p> <p>Cnr Molesworthy and Conway Lismore 2480, Phone: 6622 4481</p>
ACT Interstate Patient Travel Assistance Scheme	ACT Health Dept, PO Box 11, WODEN 2606 Tel: (02) 6244 2143 Fax: (02) 6244 2677
NT Patient Assistance Travel Scheme	Territory Health Services, PO Box 40596, CASUARINA 0811 Tel: (08) 8922 8163 Fax: (08) 8922 8286
QLD Patients Travel Subsidy Scheme	Queensland Health, GPO Box 48, BRISBANE 4001 Tel: (07) 3234 0350 Fax: (07) 3234 1577
SA Patient Assistance Transport Scheme	SA Health Dept, PO Box 3017, Rundle Mall, ADELAIDE SA 5000 Tel: (08) 8226 6606 Fax: (08) 8226 6609
TAS Patient Travel Assistance Scheme	Tasmanian Health Dept, Royal Hobart Hospital GPO Box 1061L, HOBART TAS 7000 Tel: (03) 6222 8225 Fax: (03) 6222 8949
VIC Patient Travel Assistance Scheme	Dept of Human Services, Level 12, 555 Collins Street, MELBOURNE VIC 3000 Tel: (03) 5333 6031 Fax: (03) 9616 2995
WA Patients Assisted Travel Scheme	WA Country Health Service, 189 Royal Street, EAST PERTH WA 6004 Tel: (08) 9222 2324 Fax: (08) 9222 4072

Appendix 2

Transport for Health – Health Transport Units

Area Health Service	Contact Details
Greater Southern Area Health Service	GSAHS Health Transport Unit Bourke Street Health Service Campus PO Box 274 Goulburn NSW 2580 1800 800 511
Greater Western Area Health Service	GWAHS Health Transport Unit Dubbo Campus Myall St Dubbo NSW 2830 1800 601 324
Hunter New England Area Health Service	HNEAHS Health Transport Unit Locked Bag 9783 TAMWORTH NEMSC NSW 2348 1800 660 361
North Coast Area Health Service	NCAHS Health Transport Unit Port Macquarie Health Campus PO Box 126 Port Macquarie NSW 2444 (02) 6620 2168
Northern Sydney/Central Coast Area Health Service	NSCCAHS Health Transport Unit Level 5, Area Executive Gosford Hospital PO Box 361 Gosford NSW 2250 (02) 4320 5349
South Eastern Sydney/Illawarra Area Health Service	SESAHS Health Transport Unit c/- Port Kembla Hospital P.O. Box 21 Warrawong NSW 2502 (02) 4223 8146
Sydney South West Area Health Service	SSWAHS Health Transport Unit Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Missenden Rd Camperdown NSW 2050 (02) 9515 3000
Sydney West Area Health Service	SWAHS Health Transport Unit c/-IHSC Level 3 Administration and Education Building Blacktown Hospital PO Box 6105 Blacktown 2148 (02) 9881 7507

Appendix 3

Glossary

Authorised representative	Must have clinical training (registrar, resident medical officer, intern or nursing unit manager) to enable assessment and judgement of the valid medical reason for upgraded travel.
Claim form	Refers to the Transport for Health - IPTAAS Application for Assistance.
Escort	An escort is a person who for medical reasons is approved to accompany a Transport for Health - IPTAAS patient while travelling to specialist medical treatment and/or during their period of treatment. Escorts are generally adults able to cope with the special medical needs of the patient.
Financial disadvantage	A patient or parent/guardian (where the patient is less than 17 years of age) is considered financially disadvantaged if they receive a Commonwealth Government Pension or have a weekly income equivalent to or less than the maximum pension, or have been issued with either a Commonwealth Health Care Card or Commonwealth Seniors' Health Care Card.
IPTAAS	Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme
Health Transport Units	Health Transport Units are responsible for administering Transport for Health - IPTAAS under the Transport for Health policy within the Area Health Service in which the recipient of Transport for Health - IPTAAS benefits resides.
Patient	Reference to a patient may include a patient eligible for assistance under the Scheme or where applicable, a parent or guardian in the case of a person under 17 years of age, or a guardian in the case of a person under guardianship.
Proof of financial status	Evidence of a patient/guardian's financial status means the presentation of a current Pension, Health Care or Commonwealth Seniors' Health Care Card issued by the Australian Government or a statement from their employer detailing average weekly income.
Recognised specialist medical treatments	This is treatment that is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognised by the Health Insurance Commission and identified in the Commonwealth Medical Benefits Scheme for the purposes of Medicare benefits, and • Where any drug/s used in association with such recognised treatment is approved for this purpose by the Commonwealth Therapeutic Goods Administration.
Specialist medical practitioner	For Transport for Health - IPTAAS purposes, specialist means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A medical practitioner who is recognised as a specialist or consultant physician in a particular specialty for the purposes of the Health Insurance Act 1973, and recorded as such by the Health Insurance Commission under codes 001 – 099 of the Medicare Provider File.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A medical practitioner (including a registrar) employed as a specialist by the Commonwealth or State or by the proprietors of an approved hospital, where written confirmation of this specialist status is provided. • A dental practitioner registered as an oral surgeon contracted to render oral surgery in the operating theatre of a hospital established under the Health Insurance Act 1973, and recorded as such by the Health Insurance Commission under code 102 – Dentist (Approved) (Oral Maxillofacial Surgeon), of the Medicare Provider File.
Specialist oral health surgeon	<p>For Transport for Health - IPTAAS purposes, specialist oral health surgical treatment means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treatment by an accredited Dental Practitioner who is a specialist or consultant physician for oral surgery conducted in an operating theatre of an approved hospital and listed in the Commonwealth Medicare Benefits for Services by Dental Practitioners Handbook; or • Orthodontic and associated dental treatment where the patient is registered as a cleft lip and palate patient and the treatment is listed in the Commonwealth Medical Benefits for Services by Accredited Dental Practitioners in the Treatment of Cleft Lip and Cleft Palate Conditions Handbook.
Specialist oral and maxillofacial surgery	<p>Oral and maxillofacial surgery is defined as the surgical specialty which deals with the diagnosis, surgical and adjunctive treatment of diseases, injuries and defects of the oral and maxillofacial region and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair of wounds • Lipectomy • Upper aerodigestive tract endoscopic procedures • Tumours • Aspiration of haematoma • Osteotomy of the jaw • Genioplasty • Fracture of mandible or maxilla
Transport for Health - IPTAAS	<p>Transport for Health - Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme</p>