



# The Hon Jillian Skinner MP

## Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### **OVERHAUL OF IPTAAS A WIN FOR COUNTRY PATIENTS**

Patients in Broken Hill and across NSW who access the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS), will benefit from a significant overhaul of the current complex administration process, the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, said today.

As part of a raft of new changes, patients will soon be able to complete and claim their travel and accommodation subsidies online.

Last year, the NSW Government announced a significant boost of \$28 million, over 4 years, to the IPTAAS. The increase in funding means a 30 per cent boost in accommodation subsidies and a 25 per cent boost in petrol subsidies.

Minister Skinner said today's announcement was in response to concerns raised by country patients and community organisations about administrative complexities and long processing times.

"We want to make it as simple as possible for patients who travel long distances to access treatment to benefit from the subsidies- and that's what today's announcement is about," Minister Skinner said.

"Consumers have the right to expect that their claims for travel costs will be processed in a consistent manner across the state despite where they live," she said.

Some of the key improvements that will be delivered over coming weeks are:

- **A new online claiming system, where patients can complete and claim their subsidy online;**
- **A simpler, shorter application form;**
- **A 'one-off' recording of claimant details, to avoid unnecessary paperwork;**
- **The ability for patients to monitor the progress of their claims online; and**
- **The ability for patients to change their personal details (ie: bank details)**

The Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health, Melinda Pavey, said the improvements support the NSW Government's commitment to ensuring that the people of NSW have access to timely and quality health care regardless of where they live.

"This is a win for people who access IPTAAS who will now benefit from the streamlined administrative approach, in addition to the increase in subsidies which came into effect at the beginning of the year," Mrs Pavey said.

"We've already had positive feedback from *Cancer Voices NSW*, The Leukaemia Foundation and Kidney Health Australia which is great," she said.

The Member for Murray-Darling, John Williams, welcomed the Minister's announcement.

"I'm thrilled the Minister was able to accept my offer to visit the region today and I know local patients will be extremely pleased with the changes the NSW Government is making to the IPTAAS.

"This boost supports the NSW Government's commitment to ensuring that the people of NSW have access to timely and quality health care regardless of where they live."

Other details of changes to the IPTAAS, which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012, include:

- Increase in fuel subsidy from 15 to 19 cents / km;
- Private accommodation subsidy increase from \$30 per week to \$140 per week, and the previous one-week exclusion period discontinued;
- Increase in commercial accommodation subsidy from \$33 per night single room, \$46 per night double room to \$43 and \$60 per night respectively;
- The \$40 co-contribution levied on each claim made by non-pensioners / non-health care card holders will be capped once a patient's IPTAAS subsidies reach \$1,000 within a one year period. This will benefit those travelling regularly, such as patients requiring specialist treatment for a chronic disease; and
- Patients are able to use a new travel diary for subsequent visits to the same specialist within a year of referral. The diary must be signed by the treating specialist (or his/ her representative), and submitted together with original receipts for travel by public transport or accommodation, to the relevant local IPTAAS office.