



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

Interstate Patient Travel Scheme (IPTS)

Process Guidelines



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1. IPTS Process Guidelines

The IPTS Process Guidelines must be read in conjunction with the IPTS Policy Document.

1.1 Background

The IPTS provides financial assistance to eligible patients who are required to travel for specialist health services not available in Western Australia (WA). The scheme assists with travel and accommodation costs only. It is not intended to cover all costs associated with accessing specialist services.

These Process Guidelines outline the assistance available to eligible patients.

Where specific situations have not been addressed in this document, the following principles will be used when making administrative decisions.

- **Patient safety** – the safety of patients is a key consideration in this document, including ensuring clinically appropriate patient travel
- **Access** – the scheme supports patient access to specialist health services
- **Subsidy** – the scheme does not cover full costs associated with travel and accommodation
- **Value for money** – the scheme promotes the efficient use of public resources.

2. IPTS process

2.1 Application

The IPTS electronic application form must be completed by the referring WA specialist on behalf of their patient and forwarded to the Project Officer, Office of the Chief Medical Officer. Wherever possible, the completed IPTS application form should be submitted as soon as the referring specialist completes the application form for which travel and/or accommodation assistance is sought. This allows time for the eligibility and level of assistance to be assessed, and the patient informed of the outcome of the application prior to making travel and/or accommodation arrangements.

Applications will not be accepted if the author is not the referring specialist and will be returned to the sender. Supporting documentation should be listed on the first page of the application form and stamped by the referring specialist.

The application will be reviewed by the Project Officer to ensure it is completed with sufficient detail and all attachments are included. Once the application satisfies all requirements on the checklist, the case will be sent for review by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer.

The IPTS application form requires:

- The patient's contact details
- Details of the patient's medical condition and treatment thus far
- Details of what local WA treatment options have been explored

- The reason interstate travel is needed
- Details of the medical treatment sought interstate and the relevant MBS item number(s)
- Referring specialist contact details
- Escort's contact details, where relevant
- Attachments including proof of residence, concession card photocopy, private health insurance correspondence, copy of referral letter from specialist, and any other supporting documentation relevant to the eligibility criteria.

2.1.1 Where to find application forms

The electronic application form can be obtained from https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Assistance-with-travel-costs-to-receive-medical-care

2.1.2 Incomplete applications

If an IPTS application form is incomplete or documentation is missing, the Project Officer will notify the referring specialist and the incomplete application form will be returned for completion. This may cause considerable delays to the approval process.

Lodging the application form itself does not constitute approval.

2.2 Responsibilities of referring specialist

The referring specialist must ensure:

- The IPTS application (or appeal form) is filled with detailed explanations and all attachments are present
- They are contactable for medical related queries during the IPTS process
- All local treatment options have been thoroughly investigated (and outlined on the application form) and that the required specialist medical service is unable to use telehealth
- The treating interstate specialist understands that the referral is for treatment **only** so prior work-up e.g. bloodwork, imaging should be undertaken in WA. This must be noted in the original referral
- Local follow up is arranged and communicated to the treating interstate specialist
- If the patient's travel needs are urgent (i.e. the patient will need to travel within a week), the specialist should ensure that the Project Officer is informed as soon as practicable
- The applicant understands that their application for IPTS support is subject to approval.

2.2.1 Telehealth

- The expansion of telehealth provides opportunities to reduce the need for patients to travel to access specialist services. If a patient chooses to travel when telehealth is available and clinically appropriate, IPTS subsidies will not be provided.

2.3 Responsibilities of the applicant (patient)

The applicant (or parents/guardians) must ensure that they:

- Provide their specialist with current contact details and be available for contact during the application (or appeals) process
- Provide the referring specialist with required documents including:
 - proof of residence
 - concession card photocopy
 - private health insurance correspondence
 - medical information
 - any other supporting documentation relevant to the eligibility criteria
- Understand that failure to provide necessary information will delay the processing of their application
- Understand that their application does not guarantee approval.

2.4 Assessment of applications

Complete applications are assessed against the agreed eligibility criteria, as per the most current IPTS Policy document. Each application is reviewed on a case-by-case basis and approval is granted at the discretion of the Chief Medical Officer.

In assessing the application, the Department may disclose de-identified information relating to an applicant's medical condition and application to a medical expert or medical expert panel. If the applicant's medical condition is very rare this may mean that the applicant is identifiable by this information.

2.5 Notification

Applications are reviewed as expeditiously as possible, however, applications that are incomplete, require further clarification, lack sufficient detail or supporting documentation will take longer to process.

If the application is approved, the Project Officer will notify the outcome within three business days in writing to the referring medical specialist and the patient. The patient will also be informed:

- What has been approved, including subsidy rates and dates covered
- Terms and conditions of the IPTS funding
- Escort approval if applicable.

Applicants are to inform the Project Officer of their intention to agree to the terms and conditions of the scheme before the booking process commences.

If the application has been declined, the Project Officer must notify the referring specialist and patient in writing of the outcome. Feedback on the application will be provided, including the reason it was declined and process for lodging an appeal.

2.6 Appeals

Appeals against the decision must be submitted by the referring specialist to the Project Officer. Appeals lodged more than a month after notification from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer will not be accepted. Appeals will be assessed in the same manner as the original application with the same eligibility criteria and requirements. However, the IPTS Appeals Committee shall consider any new or supporting information provided as part of the appeal.

2.6.1 Lodging the appeal

When lodging an appeal, referring specialists are requested to complete an IPTS Appeals form available online.

The appeal will be reviewed by the Project Officer to ensure it is completed with sufficient detail and all attachments. Once the form satisfies all requirements on the checklist, a meeting will be arranged as expeditiously as possible for the Appeals Committee to consider the appeal. Appeals forms that are incomplete, require further clarification, or lack sufficient detail or supporting documentation will take longer to process.

2.6.2 The Appeals Committee

The Appeals Committee will consist of two of the following:

- Chief Health Officer
- Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer

When unavailable, committee members may elect a suitable delegate to act in their place. An expert advisor/s from a relevant speciality may be consulted to inform the committee when required.

In assessing an appeal, the Department may disclose de-identified information relating to an applicant's medical condition and application to a medical expert or medical expert panel. If the applicant's medical condition is very rare this may mean the applicant is identifiable by this information.

2.6.3 The role of the Appeals Committee

The role of the Appeals Committee is to examine the decision-making process and adherence to the policy, as outlined in this document. The Appeals Committee will advise the Chief Medical Officer:

- To uphold the previous decision
- Recommend approval of the applicant.

2.6.4 Representation

There will be no legal representation, nor provision for personal representation by the applicant.

2.7 Bookings and payment

2.7.1 Responsibility for booking and accommodation

The applicant is responsible for making all travel and accommodation enquiries and bookings. IPTS does not cover the GST component of travel and accommodation.

Patients and escorts will have access to an accommodation booking website. It is important that the applicant (patient) check the availability of suitable accommodation prior to booking commercial accommodation.

IPTS travel and accommodation subsidy rates appear in Appendix 1: Schedule 1

Note: IPTS assistance will not be provided if flights are taken as part of a frequent flyer or similar scheme, or where a charter flight is used.

2.7.2 Payment

It is the applicant's (patient's) responsibility to arrange and pay for all travel and accommodation. The Project Officer may arrange for an advance purchase through the Office of the Chief Medical Officer where financial hardship can be demonstrated provided at least four working days' notice is provided.

2.7.3 Subsidy claims

The procedures for determining the subsidies for travel and accommodation have been outlined in **Schedule 1 – Appendix 1**.

When seeking reimbursement for costs, the IPTS patient who has returned to WA must claim for pre-approved subsidies no more **than six weeks from conclusion of their journey**. Claims must be submitted in writing and the following must be attached to the fully completed and **signed 'subsidies form'**.

- Original transport tickets, proof of payment for e-tickets or the traveller's copy of tickets or itinerary with cost breakdown where air travel has been undertaken are also required. Boarding passes alone do not contain sufficient information.
- Accommodation invoices and receipts to identify the applicant by name and specify the dates of accommodation and be in alignment with the treatment period
- Signed private accommodation confirmation form for patients who have stayed with family or friends

2.7.4 Patients who miss the scheduled flight or the medical appointment

If patients are unable to travel on their scheduled journey, they must provide at least 24 hours notice of cancellation to the Project Officer. If patients do not provide adequate notice, or miss the appointment without good reason:

- The patient will be responsible for the cost
- The patient will not be eligible to claim IPTS for a second trip unless there are exceptional circumstances.

2.7.5 Postponed admissions or cancelled specialist appointments

In the event of the following:

- A hospital admission for the procedure has been postponed
- A specialist appointment is cancelled or postponed
- The patient is not notified until after commencing the journey

The IPTS scheme will provide financial assistance towards the cost of this travel.

3. Special rulings

3.1 Escorts

3.1.1 Non-medical escorts

Patients aged 17 years and under are automatically entitled to one escort (parent or guardian). In life threatening circumstances an application can be made for additional escorts. Based on the circumstances, approval may be granted for both parents and siblings less than 24 months of age to receive IPTS support.

Application for additional escorts must be made on the same application form. The reason additional escorts are required must be clearly indicated. Failure to give a reason may result in delays to processing the application. Approval of additional escorts will be at the discretion of the Chief Medical Officer or delegate.

Additional family members and non-approved escorts may still choose to travel with the patient but will be required to self-fund their travel and accommodation.

If for medical reasons delivery of a neonate needs to occur in a specialised facility interstate, one escort (usually the father) will automatically be approved to accompany the mother and unborn child. In extenuating circumstances where financial hardship has been identified and where the trip is expected to be over an extended time frame, an application for IPTS support for siblings under five years may also be considered. Approval will be at the discretion of the Chief Medical Officer or delegate.

For patients aged 18 years and over, non-medical escorts will only be approved in extreme circumstances where the patient is at significant medical risk, or danger, if travelling alone. General or emotional support to the adult patient is an insufficient reason. Request for an escort must be made by the referring specialist on the application form with the reason an escort is required clearly indicated. Failure to give a reason will result in delays to processing the application. Approval of an escort will be at the discretion of the Chief Medical Officer or delegate. Non-approved escorts may still choose to travel with the patient but will be required to self-fund their travel and accommodation.

3.1.2 Medical escorts

The hospital books and pays for all air travel associated with medical escorts. The IPTS does not cover travel or accommodation expenses for medical escorts. This is the responsibility of the referring hospital.

3.2 Deceased patients

When a patient is identified as high risk of imminent death then immediate family members may be provided with a subsidy to travel to the patient location. If a patient travelling under IPTS dies at the interstate treatment facility and it is not the liability of another or compensable (Statute) case, then assistance will be available towards the cost of returning the deceased person home. The IPTS will provide financial assistance towards processes and items necessary for the deceased to be transported home, including preparation of the deceased body and a specialised container. **The Project Officer will liaise with the relevant interstate treatment facility in returning the deceased person home.**

Financial assistance payable also covers the cost of:

- Ground freight of the deceased to the interstate departure airport
- Air freight of the deceased to the Western Australian arrival airport
- Ground freight of the body to the funeral director in WA designated by the next of kin.

In all instances itemised accounts must be submitted to the Project Officer and the level of reimbursement will be calculated on the most economical options.

If the patient was travelling with an escort, the escort may continue to claim the accommodation allowance for the minimum time required to make the necessary arrangements, and also claim the travel allowance for the return journey.

3.3 Bone marrow couriers

Approved bone marrow couriers will receive IPTS assistance in accordance with the IPTS Policy.

All other expenses including meals and taxi fares are to be met by the referring hospital.

3.4 Donors

An interstate transplant donor may be eligible for IPTS assistance if the transplant recipient is a permanent WA resident. Approval is granted on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Chief Medical Officer or delegate.

IPTS assistance does not apply to WA residents who are donors for interstate recipients. Please contact the relevant Health Authority in the State/Territory in which the transplant recipient resides for travel assistance.

3.5 Paediatric organ transplantation

Limited paediatric organ transplantation is performed in WA. For a transplant assessment not available in WA, IPTS assistance is in accordance with the IPTS Policy.

When an approved patient and escorts have returned home because the patient has been placed on the waiting list for a transplant, then the patient and escorts will receive 'fully refundable' return economy airfares from Perth to the interstate destination city, as the date of the surgery interstate will be unknown prior to booking.

3.6 CAR-T cells

Patients requiring interstate CAR-T therapy may be eligible for IPTS assistance if the recipient is not partaking in a Clinical Trial. Approval is granted on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Chief Medical Officer or delegate.

IPTS assistance will be in accordance with the IPTS Policy.

Appendix 1: Schedule 1 – IPTS subsidy rates

Transport subsidy rates

Transport Type	Subsidy Rate
Air travel (excluding GST)	Full reimbursement for approved air travel at economy rates. Approval required from referring medical practitioner or treating specialist prior to booking travel.
Travel by road	Max \$200.00
Private vehicle (to and from airport only)	30 cents per kilometre (mileage needs to be recorded)
or	
Taxi (to and from airport only)	For duration of journey

Accommodation subsidy rates

For profit accommodation	Maximum subsidy	
Total nights stayed (financial year)	Patient or escort only \$80 per night	Patient and escort(s) \$100 per night
Not-for-profit accommodation (financial year)	Maximum subsidy	
Total nights stayed (financial year)	Patient or escort only \$80 per night	Patient and escort(s) \$100 per night

Living allowance

Daily living allowance	Patient \$49.33	Escort \$29.69
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in alternative formats on request.

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