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Media Release

## **PATS - EXTRA FUNDING WELCOMED**

An extra \$2.5 million every year – a 33 per cent increase - to the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme.

Geoff's strong lobbying and persistence for a review of the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme, was rewarded when he presented a motion to parliament for the review and Dr Filby was charged with undertaking a review of the PATS.

Geoff said "wanting improvements to the PATS scheme has made this a reality". Dr Filby's consultation with community organisation representatives in the Electorate of Frome was appreciated and many of the issues discussed will be supported.

Geoff is extremely pleased to see an increase in funding to this scheme. All 15 of Dr Filby's recommendations to help improve the PATS administration process will now be progressed over the coming months.

Changes to the PATS scheme to come into effect on January 1, 2015 include:

- Abolishing the requirement for patients to pay the first \$30 on the travel costs (fuel or airfares) for each trip;
- Increasing the Government contribution for accommodation from \$30 per night to \$40 per night;
- Expanding the PATS criteria to accommodate escorts; and
- Allowing for approval of claims for the travel component only (not accommodation) where patients extend stay longer than medically necessary.

In South Australia alone last year more than 16,000 people accessed PATS when they had to travel more than 100 kilometres for a hospital visit or to visit a medical specialist. The PATS has been helping people who have to travel long distances for health care for more than 40 years.

The initial scope of Dr Filby's review was what improvements could be made to the PATS scheme within its existing Budget and those recommendations would be acted on straight away.

This will include redesigning the application process to make it simpler for people to access, removing unnecessary paperwork and including for the first time the ability to apply for PATS online.

The full cost of the improvement to PATS will cost \$9.4 million over the next four years and \$2.5 million per year after that. For information about PATS and the recent review visit [www.countryhealthsa.sa.gov.au/PATS](http://www.countryhealthsa.sa.gov.au/PATS)

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Member for Frome