

Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme – Repatriation of deceased patients

1. Statement

The Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme (PTSS) Repatriation Policy outlines the framework requirements for the repatriation of deceased eligible PTSS patients on PTSS related travel.

2. Purpose

The intent of this policy is to:

- Provide the framework for the repatriation of deceased PTSS patients whilst on PTSS related travel,
- Promote effective local decision making for the repatriation of deceased eligible PTSS patients on PTSS related travel to their Queensland place of residence or Queensland based First Nations Country, and
- Support the cultural protocols, practices and the unique needs of and with First Nations peoples regarding the return of their deceased loved ones to their homelands or Country.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) and employees, contractors and consultants employed by the Department of Health or by HHSs.

4. Principles

The repatriation of deceased eligible PTSS patients to their Queensland place of residence or Queensland based First Nations Country must be consistent with the scheme's principles of:

- **Accessibility** – the scheme and information pertaining to the scheme shall be accessible (available and understandable) to staff and the public
- **Consistency** – the scheme is applied consistently across Queensland
- **Efficiency** – the scheme promotes the efficient use of public resources across Queensland
- **Equity** – the scheme facilitates equitable access to specialist healthcare services across Queensland

- **Patient-centred approach** – is integral to the PTSS decision-making process and decisions are made with empathy
- **Patient safety** – safety is a key consideration in patient travel related decisions
- **Subsidy** – the scheme does not cover full costs of travel or accommodation

Further to the scheme’s principles specific to the repatriation of deceased eligible PTSS patients whilst on PTSS related travel:

- **Cultural safety** – cultural and spiritual considerations are critical for all patients, particularly with First Nations peoples

5. Requirements

5.1. Overarching requirements

- 5.1.1. Effective 1 July 2023 deceased PTSS patients on PTSS related travel are to be repatriated to their Queensland place of residence or their Queensland Traditional Homelands or their Queensland First Nations Country
- 5.1.2. HHS discretion may be applied for repatriation of deceased PTSS patients on PTSS related travel. This may cover elements such as transitional requirements, escorts and accommodation relating to the repatriation of deceased PTSS patients on PTSS related travel
- 5.1.3. The family of the deceased is to make transport arrangements in consultation with the treating hospital and local HHS
- 5.1.4. Payments are to be made directly to the funeral director for transportation by the local HHS
- 5.1.5. Consistent with PTSS Guidelines, efforts must be made to ensure cost effectiveness of all transportation arrangements
- 5.1.6. Repatriation is for transportation costs including an escort and up to 2 nights accommodation
- 5.1.7. HHSs will be empowered to ensure appropriate compassionate arrangements occur in line with their community needs/ expectations
- 5.1.8. Expenditure is to be recorded under GL accounts:
 - 528035 PTSS – Repatriation Deceased Patients
 - 528150 PTSS – Repatriation Deceased First Nations Patients

6. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander considerations

Consistent with HEALTHQ32 this policy promotes the principle of First Nations First. HHSs are required to include repatriation details in their local Health Equity Strategy/Implementation Plan in line with local community requirements.

In addition to financial costs and administrative burden, there are also important cultural considerations for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families and communities of deceased persons to mourn their loss in a culturally appropriate and sensitive way. This can be the case for any culturally diverse family.

Being able to bury a First Nations person on their homelands or Country following their passing has a significant cultural and spiritual impact.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples consider Country as a deeply symbolic and spiritual place. The connection between person and Country reinforces Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' identity and sense of belonging and it is integral to the families that the deceased is returned to the families chosen place.

Repatriation is fundamental to progressing our commitment to Treaty and enhances spiritual beliefs that have lasted many thousands of years.

7. Human rights

Consideration, specifically for First Nations peoples (Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Queensland), as Australia's First people, has been included allowing support for transport and repatriation of deceased eligible PTSS patients on PTSS related travel, to either Queensland place of residence or Queensland First Nations country. This consideration extends to travel and accommodation of escorts.

A fundamental human right for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is to practice Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander laws and customs, which requires burial on traditional lands to honour the deceased and community, their spiritual connection and cultural importance.

8. Legislation

- *Public Sector Act 2022*
- *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*
- *Right to Information Act 2009*
- *Human Rights Act 2019*
- *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011*
- *Hospital and Health Boards (Health Equity Strategies) Amendment Regulation 2021*
- *Financial Accountability Act 2009*
- *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019*

9. Supporting resources, documents and websites

- [Queensland Health’s Open Disclosure Guide: Open and honest communication with patients, families and carers](#) (internal Queensland Health resource)
(Source:https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0030/2599041/od-guide.pdf)
- [Queensland Health’s *Sad news, sorry business - Guidelines for caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through death and dying* \(version 2\)](#)
(source:https://www.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0023/151736/sorry_business.pdf)
- [Queensland Health’s *Supporting rural and remote communities following a sudden or unexpected death: A resource for HHSs*](#)
(internal Queensland Health resource)
(https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0039/2749593/supporting-remote-communities-after-unexpected-death.pdf)
- [Queensland Health’s *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Patient Care Guideline*](#)
(source https://www.health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0022/157333/patient_care_guidelines.pdf)
- [Coroners Court of Queensland’s Funeral Assistance Scheme](#) (website <https://www.courts.qld.gov.au/courts/coroners-court/funeral-assistance#>)
- Repatriation Request (Form E)
- Frequently Asked Questions

10. Definitions

Term	Definition
Queensland place of residence	Will be a funeral home near to the patient’s residential address or First Nations Country
Aboriginal (adjective)	A person of Aboriginal descent who identifies as Aboriginal and is accepted as such by the community in which he [or she] lives (the original inhabitants of the Australian continent and surrounding islands).
Torres Strait Islander (adjective)	A person of Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as a Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he [or she] lives (the original inhabitants of the Torres Strait Islands)
First Nations	Refers to both the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples in Queensland

Term	Definition
Sad News	Torres Strait Islander term that refers to the passing of a person
Sorry Business	Aboriginal term that refers to the passing of a person
Death	Death may also be referred to as 'passing' of a patient in this document
Dying	Dying may also be referred to as the final stage/journey of life in this document
Family	A family is a group of two or more persons related by birth, marriage, or adoption who live together ; all such related persons are considered as members of one family In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture the term family may vary in definition to non-Indigenous culture. This is illustrated in the use of immediate family titles being used across the extended family sphere, i.e. brother and sister are all the males and females of the same generation
Senior member of the family/senior in-law	The family members to go to for advice on matters surrounding the death of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

11. Approval and implementation

Policy Custodian	Policy Contact Details	Approval Date	Approver
<i>Senior Director Financial Policy, Controls and Advisory</i>	<i>AskPTSS@health.qld.gov.au</i>	<i>30 June 2023</i>	<i>Chief Finance Officer</i>

Version control

Version	Date	Comments
0.1	20/06/2023	First draft
0.2	21/06/2023	Definition of Queensland place of residence
0.3	29/06/2023	Incorporate feedback from PTSS working group and consultation outcomes with the Chief First Nations Office representatives
0.4	29/06/2023	Final Draft
0.5	30/06/2023	Incorporate feedback from First Nations Health Office
0.6	05/07/2023	Incorporate feedback from First Nations Health Office
1.0	05/07/2023	Final Document