

Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme - Repatriation of deceased patients FAQs

Introduction

Following the outcomes of the 2023-24 State Budget, the government, from 1 July 2023 will fund costs associated to the repatriation of deceased eligible Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme (PTSS) patients.

These FAQs have been developed to support and guide Hospital and Health Services (HHS) in their continued administration of PTSS, with responses prepared in alignment to the principles-based Repatriation Policy.

What is the intent of the Repatriation Policy?

The intent of the policy is to support the repatriation of deceased eligible PTSS patients, whilst on PTSS related travel, to their Queensland place of residence or their Queensland Traditional Homelands or their Queensland First Nations Country.

Should the Repatriation Policy be more specific?

The policy has been designed to provide the HHS with flexibility in decision making and to support the HHS in addressing the needs of their respective communities and community groups. Ongoing consultation and engagement with each HHS will occur to ensure that the administration of the Repatriation Policy continues to evolve.

When does the Repatriation Policy commence?

The Repatriation Policy takes effect from the 1 July 2023. To support transitional requirements, HHS discretion may be applied to deceased PTSS patients prior to the effective date.

What are the principles for administering the Repatriation Policy?

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

- **Accessibility** – the PTSS and information pertaining to the PTSS shall be accessible (available and understandable) to staff and the public
- **Consistency** – the PTSS is applied consistently across Queensland
- **Efficiency** – the PTSS promotes the efficient use of public resources across Queensland
- **Equity** – the PTSS 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 PTSS does not cover full costs of travel or accommodation

Is the Repatriation Policy payment means tested?

No, the payment for repatriation is available to all eligible PTSS patients on PTSS related travel.

Is the Repatriation Policy payment capped at a certain dollar amount?

No. There is no limit to the repatriation payment amount, however consistent with PTSS Guidelines, efforts must be made to ensure cost effectiveness of all transportation arrangements.

How does the local HHS manage cost effectiveness if the next of kin, family, or the nominated representative of the deceased patient arranges transport with support from the treating HHS?

Cost effectiveness is not the driver for repatriation of deceased PTSS patients whilst undertaking PTSS related travel. Through consultation between the family and the treating HHS and local HHS, if there is an option for lower cost options such as transportation on weekdays rather than weekends, if possible, the more economical option should be considered.

What does the Repatriation Policy payment cover?

The Repatriation Policy covers transportation costs for the deceased patient including body preparation and death registration. Travel and two nights accommodation for an escort is automatically approved to assist the next of kin, family, or representative of the deceased patient to make necessary arrangements.

Is the next of kin, family, or representative of the deceased patient able to receive financial help from other sources as well as PTSS?

Yes. The Repatriation Policy covers transportation costs for the deceased patient including body preparation and death registration. The payment does not cover the cost of burial or cremation. Family members can apply for assistance from other sources to help with these costs. Family members do not need to declare whether help from other sources is received.

Is an escort automatically approved with the Repatriation Policy payment?

Yes. Travel and two nights accommodation for an escort is automatically approved to assist the next of kin, family, or the nominated representative of the deceased patient to make the necessary arrangements to transport the deceased patient home. Approval for more than one escort may be approved in special circumstances at the discretion of the patient's local HHS.

Are cultural sensitivities considered when administering the Repatriation Policy payment?

The patient's local HHS is encouraged to consider cultural sensitivities and make compassionate decisions in line with their community needs.

Does an escort have to be the deceased patient's carer?

No. The next of kin, family, or the nominated representative of the deceased patient can nominate any person who is able to support the family with the necessary transport arrangements, to be the approved escort. The escort can be different to the patient's escort while they were receiving treatment.

What subsidy amounts will the escort receive?

The standard PTSS subsidy rates for travel and accommodation apply, however the first four night accommodation rule should be waived for accommodation approved for the Repatriation Policy, if the nominated escort hasn't met the first four night rule.

Does the Repatriation policy payment apply if the patient was attending private specialist treatment?

Yes. All eligible PTSS patients on PTSS related travel are covered.

Who arranges the deceased patient's transport?

The next of kin, family, or the nominated representative of the deceased patient is to make transport arrangements in consultation with the local or treating HHS.

How is the next of kin, family, or the nominated representative of the deceased patient notified of the outcome of their application for repatriation payment?

The local HHS should assess applications within two working days of receiving the required documentation.

If the application is not approved, the next of kin, family, or the nominated representative of the deceased patient should be notified in writing and given the reason for non-approval. Notification of outcome should occur within a week of the application being received.

Is the next of kin, family, or the nominated representative of the deceased patient able to appeal the outcome of their application?

Yes, the next of kin, family, or the nominated representative of the deceased patient can appeal the outcome of their application if they don't agree with the final decision.

The appeal should be lodged at the local HHS within 30 calendar days of receiving notification of the outcome. Appeals lodged after this time are accepted at the discretion of the local HHS.

During the appeals process, the next of kin, family, or the nominated representative of the deceased patient is responsible for providing any additional information to support their appeal. This information should be considered along with their original application and assessed using the same criteria.

Appeals should be assessed within two working days from the date of lodgment but may take longer if additional information is required.

How and when is the Repatriation payment paid?

It is preferred that payments are made by the local HHS directly to the funeral director providing transportation upon receipt of the completed documentation, rather than paying to the deceased's estate. This ensures the family of the deceased patient is not out of pocket due to the GST or waiting for reimbursement. Payments processed by the HHS will be made in PTIMS or in S4Hana for OPTML users.

What if the next of kin, family, or the nominated representative of the deceased patient wants to pay the funeral director or the funeral director doesn't wish to become a vendor with Queensland Health?

Reimbursement can be made to the family of the deceased patient however any GST paid by the family is unable to be reimbursed.

Who can I contact for support?

Contact Mary or Tania at AskPTSS@health.qld.gov.au for further information and support.