

House of Assembly

18 June 2008

Question: COUNTRY HEALTH CARE PLAN

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:01): What provision has the Minister for Health made for an increase in the passenger assisted transport scheme for rural residents who will have to travel further under his country health plan? Where a country resident has to travel and stay overnight for health services, what provision has the minister made for extra accommodation allowance? The opposition is aware of a South-East man who has been sent a cheque for \$1 under the PAT scheme. He has had surgery at Mount Gambier and has had to travel to Adelaide twice for follow-up treatment.

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Kurna—Minister for Health, Minister for the Southern Suburbs, Minister Assisting the Premier in the Arts) (15:01): The member for Hammond was not in breach of the standing orders by referring to the Minister for Transport as the owner of that scheme. The passenger assisted transport scheme is under enormous pressure, as we all know. A range of things—

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. J.D. HILL: Well, they are the rules that were in place when you were in government. If you didn't change it when you were in government, I think it is a bit rich attacking us for not having changed it either. We are actually trying to change it. As I pointed out earlier, the member for Goyder came to see me yesterday about a trial which is working on the Yorke Peninsula and which is actually providing more transport opportunities to a broader range of people who are currently not covered by the PAT scheme.

The point in relation to the PAT scheme is that we will try to expand it. The commonwealth government has announced that it is looking into it as well, so I hope there are more resources available for people because I realise that it is an issue. The reality is that, if we put more health services in country South Australia, fewer people will have to travel to Adelaide so there will be less need for long-distance travel and less need for overnight accommodation. It will not disappear but there will be less pressure on families to travel. That is what our commitment is; that is what we want to work with the community to achieve.