



Cancer Council SA State-Budget Submission 2024-2025



**Cancer
Council**
SA

All of us
against cancer

Introduction.

It is my pleasure to present Cancer Council SA's Submission for the 2024-2025 South Australian Budget.

At Cancer Council SA we are committed to reducing the rate and impact of cancer on our community through best practice prevention, research and support programs.

We continue our work to reduce the number of preventable cancers, fund world-class research projects across high quality institutions and provide quality support programs, including 120 rooms of accommodation for rural and remote South Australians who need to travel to Adelaide for cancer treatment.

Our recommendations are:



Fund a public review of the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme to ensure the system is fit for purpose to assist regional people in accessing treatment.



Invest \$200,000 in targeted prevention programs to stop young people vaping.



Commit \$250,000 per year for four years for shade grants for eligible schools, preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres, protecting children from skin cancer.

These initiatives are designed to reduce the impact of preventable cancers in our community into the future, while alleviating some of the current burden on our health system.

We have seen great strides in cancer care and survival rates over the last 30 years and Cancer Council SA continues to build on them every day.



Yours sincerely

Kerry Rowlands
Chief Executive
Cancer Council SA



Recommendation:

Fund a public review of the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme to ensure the system is fit for purpose to assist regional people in accessing treatment.

Where you live should not dictate your cancer outcome, yet higher excess cancer deaths can be seen in regional areas across South Australia.

The Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATs) provides a vital lifeline for regional individuals to undergo cancer treatment and attend appointments not available to them in their local area.

The issue of accessing medical care is a critical one for regional South Australians. Port Lincoln, as an example experiences cancer deaths 32 per cent above the Australian average, whereas in Whyalla rates are 28 per cent above the average, and in the Flinders Ranges cancer deaths are 30 per cent above the Australian average¹. Clearly we need to do more to ensure regional South Australians are accessing the treatment they need.

Cancer Council SA is South Australia's largest provider of non-commercial accommodation for regional people forced to travel for medical treatment. Our role gives us a unique understanding of the cost burdens regional South Australians have when travelling for treatment. It costs approximately \$133 per night per guest to provide a room at Cancer Council SA's accommodation. This means there is a gap of around \$93 which is funded by donations from the South Australian community.

The types of services that people travel to Adelaide for include radiotherapy and complicated surgeries. People travelling to Adelaide for radiotherapy are often required to stay for 4-6 weeks of treatment, meaning they need to find accommodation for a significant period of time.

In 2014, then Premier Jay Weatherill and Health Minister Jack Snelling announced the biggest single boost to PATs in South Australia's history². An extra \$2.5 million per year was invested and the accommodation rebate was lifted to \$40 per night, which is where it remains today.

Notably, \$40 per night is the lowest rebate in the nation. Cancer Council SA recognises the investment the South Australian Government has made into PATs, including a recent doubling of the fuel rebate. However, the current level of the accommodation rebate causes difficulties for many people living in regional and remote areas.

Since 2021, Western Australia, New South Wales, Tasmania and Queensland have all increased their transport scheme accommodation rates to ease the financial burden on patients required to travel for specialised medical services. For instance, Western Australia increased their accommodation support rate, which now sits at \$106.10 per night and is linked to Consumer Price Index increases.

¹ Australian Cancer Atlas (<https://atlas.cancer.org.au>). Cancer Council Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, Cooperative Research Centre for Spatial Information. Version 02-2021. Accessed 9 January 2024

² 'Increased funding for Patient Assistance Transport Scheme, 31 January 2014, media release

Tasmania also reviewed their travel assistance scheme in 2021-22 and made 35 recommendations to improve their scheme³. In May 2022, a cross-party Committee made 44 recommendations to overhaul regional and remote healthcare in Tasmania⁴.

We believe it is time for South Australia to review the PATS, including the rate of accommodation subsidy paid, access criteria for people under 100km from treatment, the administrative requirements of the scheme and ways the scheme can be made more user friendly for regional and remote South Australians.

Comparison of accommodation subsidies across Australia

State	Single rate	Couple rate	Qualifying criteria
WA ^{*5}	\$106.10	\$121.10	Travel more than 100km to access nearest eligible specialist medical service or 70km for cancer or renal services.
NSW ⁶	\$75 per night, first 7 nights \$120 per night, from day 8 onwards	\$75 per night, first 7 nights \$120 per night, from day 8 onwards	Travel from permanent address for treatment at least 100km (one way), or at least 200km in a week by making multiple trips to and from treatment.
Tas ⁷	\$76	\$152	- Travel more than 50km (one way) to the nearest oncology or dialysis treatment centre. - Travel more than 75km (one way) to the nearest appropriate medical service. - Travel more than 75km (one way) to access lymphoedema treatment.
Qld ⁸	\$70	\$140	Travel more than 50km (one way) from public hospital or public health facility, closest to permanent address, to attend nearest eligible health service.
NT ⁹	\$60	\$120	- Permanent address more than 200km from nearest approved specialist. - Travel more than 400km per week for renal or oncology treatment.
ACT ¹⁰	\$50	\$100	Travel an unreasonable distance from permanent address to health service in one day.
Vic ^{*11}	\$45	\$90	Travel more than 100km one way or an average of 500km a week for one or more weeks.
SA ^{*12}	\$40	\$80	Travel more than 100km from permanent address to appointment or treatment location.

* Rates are ex-GST.

³ KPH, Review of the Tasmanian Patient Travel Assistance Scheme, available at Review of the Tasmanian Patient Travel Assistance Scheme (health.tas.gov.au)

⁴ Gregory X and Woodburn J, 'Inquiry into rural, regional and remote healthcare hands down findings to NSW government, available at Inquiry into rural, regional and remote healthcare hands down findings to NSW government - ABC News

⁵ WA Health, available at WA Country Health Service - PATS subsidies, accessed 11/01/2024

⁶ NSW Government, available at For patients | IPTAAS (nsw.gov.au), accessed 11/01/2024

⁷ Tasmania Department of Health, available at PTAS | Tasmanian Department of Health, accessed 11/01/2024

⁸ Queensland Government, available at The Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme | Health and wellbeing | Queensland Government (www.qld.gov.au), accessed 11/01/2024

⁹ NT Government, available at Patient Assistance Travel Scheme | NT.GOV.AU, accessed 11/01/2024

¹⁰ Canberra Health service, available at Canberra Health Services Report Template External (act.gov.au), accessed 11/01/2024

¹¹ Victoria Department of Health, available at Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS) (health.vic.gov.au), accessed 11/01/2024

¹² Government of South Australia, available at Home | Patient Assistant Transport Scheme | SA Health (pats.sa.gov.au), accessed 11/01/2024



Recommendation:

Invest \$200,000 in targeted prevention programs to stop young people vaping, including:

- Develop a training program in consultation with Department for Education staff for teachers and school support officers to identify nicotine addiction, provide brief interventions and refer to specialist services.
- Review and evaluate Yankalilla specialist services to ensure they are easily accessible for young people.
- Employ two part time Alcohol and Other Drug workers at selected sites and evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy.
- Monitor and enforce e-cigarette legislation and tighten regulatory frameworks, particularly around promotions targeting young people on social media.

The use of e-cigarettes by young people continues to be a concern in South Australia. Alarming, vaping rates amongst 15-29 year olds have increased from 1.1 per cent in 2017 to 7.8 per cent in 2022.

E-cigarettes are not harmless. There are over 200 chemicals in a standard e-cigarette, some of which are carcinogenic. Federal and State Governments have recognised the serious issue of youth vaping and introduced restrictions on access and changed environments to reduce the impact of vaping on the community.

Cancer Council SA welcomes a focus on law reform, however has concerns about the levels of support young people can access when they are quitting vaping or lose access to vapes. We know that increasingly young people in our community will need support to quit vaping and that teachers, parents and care givers will seek guidance and advice to help young people quit.

In 2023, Cancer Council SA hosted a 'hackathon' which brought together young people, teachers, parents and health professionals to develop proposals to stop young people vaping and assist those with a nicotine addiction to quit vaping.



The proposals with the strongest support and most robust evidence aim to assist teachers, parents and care givers to work with young people to easily get support from specialist services. Our recommendations above are consistent with the findings from this hackathon.

Cancer Council SA values the work and leadership Yankalilla Area School has undertaken in addressing the issue of vaping and we encourage the Government to build on this across other school sites.

We want to see young people who are vaping, and those using traditional cigarettes, provided with the levels of support and guidance they need to live a healthier life.

These proposals complement initiatives SA Health and the Department for Education are already implementing through their Vaping Action Plan for Schools, including posters and fact sheets on the harms of using vapes along with what supports are available.



Recommendation:

Commit \$250,000 per year for four years for shade grants for eligible schools, preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres, protecting children from skin cancer.

Protecting South Australian children and young people from overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation is vital to reduce their risk of skin cancer. Sun exposure during the first 18 years of life is the most critical time for developing skin cancer.

The earlier a child starts protecting their skin, the higher their chance of avoiding a skin cancer diagnosis later in life. Cancer Council SA has been proudly supporting South Australian schools for 26 years and early childhood centres for 21 years through our free SunSmart program. We welcome the opportunity to further collaborate with the Government on a new shade grant program.

Currently, Government participation in the SunSmart program is:

- 40.7 per cent of preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres
- 39.7 per cent of primary and special schools
- 46.7 per cent of out of school hours care services, managed by Governing Councils on Department sites.

We are committed to seeing this participation grow and working collaboratively with the State Government to achieve this outcome.

At least two in three Australians are diagnosed with some form of skin cancer in their lifetime. Melanoma is the most dangerous form of skin cancer and is also the most common cancer diagnosed in young Australians aged 15–29 years.

Alarmingly, around one person every six hours dies from melanoma in Australia. In South Australia, around 900 South Australians are diagnosed with melanoma each year¹³.

Cancer Council SA encourages the South Australian community to Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek and Slide when the UV is 3 and above to protect themselves from harmful UV radiation. Children and young people rely on the provision of safe environments when at school to be protected, particularly when seeking shade.

In South Australia, sun protection is recommended for at least nine months of the year, with UV reaching damaging levels from the start of August to the end of April. Furthermore, education services operate up to 5 days a week, during peak UV times of the day. In Adelaide, over 70 per cent of days in 2022 had a maximum UV Index of 3 or higher. Adequate sun protection whilst at school is crucial to decreasing a child's risk of developing skin cancer later in life¹⁴.

Quality shade that meets Cancer Council shade guidelines, can reduce UV radiation exposure by up to 75 per cent¹⁵. Quality shade can also provide dual purpose spaces that encourage active play and provide more outdoor learning opportunities for children and young people year-round.

In a recent survey, less than half (40 per cent) of South Australian schools surveyed reported having adequate shade for both passive and active activities. Sixteen per cent of schools surveyed reported that the cost of shade was a challenge¹⁶.



The Department for Education's 'Outdoor learning environment standard' requires incorporation of the provision of adequate shade for children and young people in the design of outdoor learning environments in South Australia. Cancer Council SA believes a new Shade Grants program can help department schools, preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres provide adequate shade required under this standard.

Under a Shade Grants program, department schools, preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres could be eligible for up to \$50,000 for the development and erection of a permanent shade structure or repair/replace an existing permanent shade structure.

Cancer Council Queensland is funded by Queensland Health to administer the SunSmart Shade Creation Initiative for permanent shade structures. The program in place provides funding for not-for-profit organisations that cater to children and young people.

Cancer Council SA believes that a similar scheme in South Australia would give all department schools, preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres, particularly those in Category 1 and 2, the opportunity to provide adequate shade for children,

students and staff as well as community members who use school facilities on weekends and during school holidays.

As a requirement of the Shade Grants program, department schools, preschools, kindergartens and childcare centres would need to demonstrate a commitment to sun protection behaviours through maintaining SunSmart recognition or applying to become SunSmart as part of the SunSmart Schools and Early Childhood Program.

Currently around 900 early childhood centres, preschools, kindergartens, schools and OSHC facilities across South Australia have SunSmart recognition. Access to shade grant funding would encourage more schools, preschools and kindergartens to join the SunSmart program and access support to review their sun protection policies and practices.

¹³ Cancer in South Australia 2020 - with projections to 2023. Adelaide: South Australian Cancer Registry, Prevention and Population Health Directorate, Wellbeing SA, Government of South Australia; 2022

¹⁴ The Commonwealth of Australia, Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency, 2022, Daily Maximum UV Index, Adelaide.

¹⁵ Parsons P, Neale R, Wolski P, Green A. 1998, The shady side of solar protection, Medical Journal of Australia, vol. 168, 327-330

¹⁶ Cancer Council SA, Sun protection policy and practice in South Australian primary schools. Evaluation of the National SunSmart Schools Program in South Australia, 2017.

Tackling cancer takes all of us.

Our purpose is to reduce the rate and impact of cancer through best practice prevention, research and support.

We are here for all South Australians impacted by cancer and provide the following services.

People with cancer

We provide practical and professional support services for people with cancer. Our 13 11 20 telephone and web chat service is there for all South Australians, providing information, support and a listening ear.

Carers and families

We have a wide range of information and support programs, including our 13 11 20 telephone and web chat service, for all South Australians impacted by cancer.

Regional South Australians

We have accommodation services for regional people who need to come into Adelaide for their cancer treatment.

Cancer research

We fund vital research that saves lives.

Health professionals

We have information and support services where health professionals can refer those impacted by cancer.

Government

We help advance policy and legislation changes by being a source of expert information and the voice of the community.

Future generations

We work to create a future where cancer is no longer feared but seen as a preventable and manageable disease.



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