



**Cancer
Council**
SA



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**Budget 2025-26
Submission.**

Introduction

It brings me great pleasure to present Cancer Council SA's Submission for the 2025-2026 South Australian State Budget.

Cancer Council SA is committed to working with the community to reduce the rate and impact of cancer for all South Australians, no matter where they live.

This commitment extends through our work and vital partnerships that are reducing the rate of preventable cancer diagnoses in our community, supporting world-class researchers who are discovering innovative cancer treatments and prevention strategies, and providing impactful support programs that ease the burden of cancer for our community.

We seek to work with you to increase our ability to provide support for rural and remote South Australians facing cancer treatment, as well as better protect young people and reduce their risk of a cancer diagnosis.

Our 2025-2026 recommendations seek to improve access to South Australia's healthcare system by preventing hospital admissions and reducing the number of preventable cancers in our community.

Cancer Council SA's recommendations:



Make it easier for people in regional South Australia to access cancer care.



Help protect students and school staff from harmful UV radiation.

These initiatives build on the work Cancer Council SA has undertaken across South Australia for nearly 100 years and will help relieve the burden on our health system, now and for generations to come.



Yours sincerely

Kerry Rowlands
Chief Executive
Cancer Council SA



Make it easier for people in regional South Australia to access cancer care.

Recommendations:

1. Increase the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme Accommodation Rebate from \$44 to \$110 for individuals and \$154 with an approved escort ensuring all people in rural and remote South Australia have equity of access to treatment and support.
2. Introduce an annual indexation (CPI or equivalent) to reflect future cost of living increments.
3. Amend the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme to make processes easier for rural and remote South Australians who use the Scheme.

All South Australians deserve the right to access equitable cancer care, no matter where they live. The Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATS) helps thousands of South Australians access life-saving cancer treatment each year, but it does not go far enough to ensure that people forced to travel for treatment can affordably access appropriate cancer care and do so without significant stress.

The success of the PATS requires collaboration between governments, health services, accommodation providers and support networks. Together we can provide services that allow rural and remote people to leave hospital but still access the care they require. This collaboration reduces the pressure on hospitals and increases the availability of hospital beds for South Australians who really need them.

Without appropriate levels of support, people in rural and remote areas lose access to vital treatment and have poorer outcomes than those living closer to treatment facilities. People in these areas often delay or don't receive the recommended treatment because they cannot afford the costs associated with travel and accommodation incurred to receive that care¹.

Minimising delays in treatment for people with cancer can reduce healthcare costs and the risk of prolonged hospital stays^{2,3}. It has also been shown that for every four-week delay in treatment there is 6-8 per cent increased risk of death⁴.

Radiotherapy is not available in South Australia's regions meaning people in rural and remote areas need to travel and spend extended time away from their home, families and support networks. This centralisation of radiotherapy will continue for the foreseeable future.

People living in rural areas have on average, lower incomes than those living in Adelaide⁵. The requirements of travel for treatment exacerbate this financial divide and create barriers for people who can least afford them. Adding travel costs to changed financial circumstances for a patient, carer and families increases stress at an already trying time.

¹ Ms Megan Varlow, Director, Cancer Control Policy, Cancer Council Australia, Committee Hansard, 31 January 2024, p. 6.

² Accordino MK, Wright JD, Vasan S, Neugut AI, Hillyer GC, Hershman DL. Factors and Costs Associated With Delay in Treatment Initiation and Prolonged Length of Stay With Inpatient EPOCH Chemotherapy in Patients With Hematologic Malignancies. *Cancer Invest.* 2017 Mar 16;35(3):202-214

³ Kallen MA, Terrell JA, Lewis-Patterson P, Hwang JP. Improving wait time for chemotherapy in an outpatient clinic at a comprehensive cancer centre. *J Oncol Pract/Am Soc Clin Oncol.* 2012;8(1):e1-e7

⁴ Hanna TP, King WD, Thibodeau S, Jalink M, Paulin GA, Harvey-Jones E et al. Mortality due to cancer treatment delay: systematic review and meta-analysis *BMJ* 2020; 371:m4087

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics. Personal income in Australia: Table 2 total income distribution by geography 2019-20 [data download]. 2022 Nov 08 [accessed 2024 July 17]. Personal Income in Australia, 2020-21 financial year | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

Cost of living pressures are increasing for all South Australians and Cancer Council SA is not immune. Donors are under financial stress while the cost of providing accommodation services continue to rise. The gap between the accommodation costs and the PATS rebate continues to widen.

Increasing the PATS rate from \$44 to \$110 per night for individuals and \$154 with an approved escort would make an adequate contribution to a person's accommodation cost and reduce the disadvantage that rural and remote people face.

Previous Governments have recognised that a viable PATS is critical to reducing health inequities and improving outcomes with the 2013 Filby Review of PATS making 15 recommendations for improvement of the Scheme⁶. The implemented recommendations coming from the Filby Review simplified and improved the PATS for clients, accommodation providers and the Health Department.

Recently the Commonwealth Community Affairs Committee inquiry, 'Equitable access to diagnosis and treatment for individuals with rare and less common cancers, including neuroendocrine cancer' recommended that state and territory governments reform patient assisted travel schemes with a view to:

- create more consistency in scheme offerings across all jurisdictions;
- increase financial assistance; and
- expand schemes to include travel and accommodation costs for clinical trial participants⁷

On 1 January 2015, ten years ago, the PATS accommodation rate was increased to \$44 per night. This was the last time the accommodation rate was increased in our State. States including New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia have all increased their rates since that time, with Western Australia's rate now increasing annually through indexation.



Additionally, the Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory, New South Wales and Western Australia do not require patients to make any payment contribution.

Every state and territory allow at least one escort to accompany patients under the age of 18, with two escorts automatically appointed to minors in the Australian Capital Territory.

Conditional approval for dual escorts for minors is available in Tasmania, Northern Territory, Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales.

⁶ Filby D. Review of the South Australian Patient Assistance Transport Scheme. Adelaide: SA Health, 2013.

⁷ 'Equitable access to diagnosis and treatment for individuals with rare and less common cancers, including neuroendocrine cancer, Senate Community Affairs Committee, May 2024, available at Equitable access to diagnosis and treatment for individuals with rare and less common cancers, including neuroendocrine cancer – Parliament of Australia (aph.gov.au)

Comparison of subsidies across Australia

This table compares the PATS rates across Australia.

State	Rate	Eligibility
WA ⁸	\$110 per night for an individual \$125 per night with an escort	Required to travel over 100km one way to nearest medical specialist service People needing to travel 70-100km for cancer treatment eligible for \$20 subsidy.
NSW ⁹	\$75 for the first 7 nights \$120 per night from day 8	Requirement to travel at least 100km one way or 200km per week to their nearest approved health service.
Tas ¹⁰	\$76 per night for an individual \$152 per night with an escort staying in Tasmania \$96 per night for an individual \$192 per night with an escort for interstate travel	Requirement to travel over 50km one way to their nearest oncology treatment or 75km for appropriate medical specialist treatment or lymphoedema treatment.
Qld ¹¹	\$70 per night for an individual \$140 per night with an escort	Required to travel at least 50km to attend the nearest eligible specialist health service.
ACT ¹²	\$70 per night for an individual \$140 per night with an escort or \$210 including a second escort if the patient is a child.	Requirement that residents be referred interstate for 'nearest treating specialist' for treatment not available in the ACT.
NT ¹³	\$60 per night for an individual \$120 per night with an escort	Required to live over 200km from nearest approved specialist or travelling over 400km per week for oncology treatment.
Vic ¹⁴	\$49.50 per night for an individual \$99 per night with an escort	Required to travel at least 100km one way or more than 500km per week for a minimum of 5 weeks.
SA ¹⁵	\$44 per night for an individual \$88 per night with an escort	Requirement to travel over 100km one way to attend treatment.

⁸WA PATS Scheme <https://www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au/Our-patients/Patient-Assisted-Travel-Scheme-PATS>, accessed 02/10/2024

⁹NSWIPTAAS, IPTAAS (nsw.gov.au), accessed 02/10/2024

¹⁰Tasmanian PTAS, PTAS | Tasmanian Department of Health, accessed 02/10/2024

¹¹Queensland PATS, The Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme | Health and wellbeing | Queensland Government (www.qld.gov.au), accessed 02/10/2024

¹²ACT Patient Travel, ACT IPTAS Interstate Patient Travel Assistance Scheme - MediStays, accessed 02/10/2024

¹³NTPATS, Patient Assistance Travel Scheme | NT.GOV.AU, accessed 02/10/2024

¹⁴VPTAS, Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS) (health.vic.gov.au), accessed 02/10/2024

¹⁵SA PATS, Home | Patient Assistant Transport Scheme | SA Health (pats.sa.gov.au), accessed 02/10/2024



Help protect students and school staff from harmful UV radiation.

Recommendations:

1. Commit \$250,000 per year for four years to co-invest in a SunSmart Shade program for schools to reduce UV exposure and support safe outdoor active play.

Every South Australian student has the right to be protected from ultraviolet radiation (UV) exposure when they are at school, no matter where they live or go to school.

Sun exposure during the first 18 years of life is the most critical time for developing skin cancer. Therefore, the earlier a child starts protecting their skin, the higher their chance of avoiding a skin cancer diagnosis later in life.

In Australia, at least two in three individuals are diagnosed with some form of skin cancer during their lifetime. Melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer, is also the most common cancer diagnosed among young Australians aged 15-29 years. Almost 1,300 Australians could be saved each year with comprehensive sun protection¹⁶.

In South Australia, around 900 individuals are diagnosed with melanoma annually¹⁷.

Cancer Council SA urges the South Australian community to Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek, and Slide when the UV Index is 3 or above to protect against harmful UV radiation which is usually at least nine months of the year, from the start of August to the end of April.

Over 970 schools, preschools, kindergartens, childcare centres and OSHC services are actively supported to implement sun protection measures through Cancer Council SA's SunSmart Schools and Early Childhood Program.

Children and young people depend on safe environments at school, particularly with adequate shade to ensure they are protected from harmful UV exposure.

Shade is a practical, user-friendly form of sun protection. Well designed and positioned shade, adhering to Cancer Council shade guidelines, can reduce UV radiation exposure by up to 75 per cent¹⁸. Shade can also create cool, comfortable spaces that protect students during unstructured active play and provide more outdoor physical activity and learning opportunities year-round.

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. Less than half of South Australian schools surveyed reported having adequate shade for both passive and active activities. Sixteen percent of schools reported that the cost of shade was challenging¹⁹.

¹⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023) Cancer data in Australia, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 29 July 2024.

¹⁷ 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

¹⁸ Parsons P, Neale R, Wolski P, Green A. 1998, The shady side of solar protection, Medical Journal of Australia, vol. 168, 327-330.

¹⁹ Cancer Council SA, Sun protection policy and practice in South Australian primary schools, Evaluation of the National SunSmart Schools Program in South Australia, 2017.

Cancer Council SA believes a new Shade Grants program, together with other sun protection measures could assist department schools, preschools, kindergartens, and childcare centres to protect children and encourage more unstructured active play while at school or care. Increasing shade will also protect school staff who are supervising children during outdoor activities.

Under a Shade Grants program, each year four eligible department sites could receive a grant for a permanent shade structure or the repair/ replacement of existing structures. The structure would require an extended warranty of more than 10 years to ensure long-term sustainability. Sites would be required to contribute at least 30 per cent of the funding towards the project and demonstrate a commitment to sun protection.

Sites would be required to further demonstrate a commitment by currently holding SunSmart status with the SunSmart program, or being on the path to achieving SunSmart recognition, to qualify for a grant. This would ensure sustainability of the grant funding.

As part of the grants program, successful schools or centres would receive ongoing support from Cancer Council SA, including regular development sessions and access to curriculum resources and Cancer Council's UV meters to use as a learning tool. They would also receive support for active play development and specific resources with suggestions on how to best utilise the space to promote unstructured active play at school. Schools would also have the opportunity to engage with Sid Seagull as part of classroom learning to reinforce SunSmart messaging to children and the local community.



A similar scheme has been successfully implemented in Queensland. The SunSmart Shade Creation Initiative saw Cancer Council Queensland and the Queensland Government partner with not-for-profit organisations who cater to 0-18 year olds to apply for funding to purchase permanent, hard roof fixed shade structures.

Access to the Shade Grants Program in South Australia will help ensure a sun safe environment for children when at school or care, and provide protection from harmful UV radiation.

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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**All of us
against cancer**