

Health-related transport and the NSW State Election 2007

Western Sydney Community Forum is a peak regional community-based organisation committed to social justice principles, meeting the needs of community groups and other relevant local and regional organisations for resourcing and representation to enable them to improve and maintain the quality of life for the residents of Western Sydney

The NSW state election will be held on 24th March 2007. These policy proposals were developed by Western Sydney Community Forum in association with the New South Wales Council of Social Services and our member organisations to improve outcomes for residents of Western Sydney.

Background

Health services are a major generator of demand for transport services.

Lack of transport to health services has a significant impact on those who experience transport disadvantage – people who through illness, financial constraints or disability have an inability to access their usual forms of transport.

Whilst some funds are available through the Transport for Health project with the creation of Health Related Transport Networks and employment of Health Transport Co-ordinators, these funds are available in rural areas only.

Metropolitan areas, regardless of the distances and time travelled to reach health services were excluded. This has a significant effect in outer urban areas. For example, the average transport time for Blue Mountains residents to access specialist health services is 90 minutes each way, a timescale repeated across many areas of Sydney.

Discussions between State government agencies have failed to resolve the issue of who is responsible for providing transport assistance to health services for Home and Community Care (HACC) clients, leaving their need unmet. The needs of other transport disadvantaged groups remain unaddressed.

To reduce the unmet need generated by transport demand to health services, and ensure equitable access to the broad range of healthrelated destinations, especially for health-related transport disadvantaged people, both an increase in funding as well as support and funding to develop innovative approaches is required.

Transport must not be a barrier to good health.

Policy proposals

WSCF recommends the Ministry of Transport, Department of Health and Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care address unresolved issues of responsibility for client travel.

WSCF recommends funding is expanded for services to ensure transport disadvantaged patients are able to access all health-related services, including specialists, allied health, dental services and private hospitals.

WSCF recommends that funding to the Transport for Health program is increased to include metropolitan areas.

WSCF recommends \$500,000 funding is provided to the Passenger Choice project for Demand Responsive Transport software to improve co-ordination between existing transport resources.

WSCF recommends hospital bed management and health-related appointment scheduling is improved. WSCF recommends the Ministry of Transport establish and support on-going Transport Forums to develop partnerships with all transport providers and stakeholders, including for health-related transport.

What you can do

There are many ways you can help promote these issues. Use this fact sheet to:

- Write about the issue in your group's newsletter.
- Write a letter about the issue to your local paper.
- Set up a letter writing stall and ask local people to write their own letters to local candidates supporting the issue.
- Organise a public meeting and invite local political candidates to speak.
- Contact Christine Laurence at Western Sydney Community Forum to discuss how your group can work with us to promote your issue.
Phone: 9687 9669 or email: christinel@wscf.org.au