



Aboriginal Health Team

Transport Scoping Report

A scoping project to understand the transport options available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the Healthy North Coast region and to identify any gaps or needs including recommendations.

August 2020

Healthy North Coast acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands across our region and pays respect to the Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise these lands were never ceded and acknowledge the continuation of culture and connection to land, sky and sea. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples and honour the rich diversity of the world's oldest living culture.

Background

In 2018, Healthy North Coast's Needs Assessment identified that more than a quarter of Aboriginal people in the region experienced difficulty in accessing GPs, specialists and allied health due to limited public transport and distance to travel (HNC, 2018). Furthermore, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers across the North Coast, tabled at a forum in May 2019, identified transport brokerage and availability as a key priority to addressing barriers to accessing health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across North Coast NSW.

There was also a collaborative project in the northern regions between HART Services, Tweed Byron and Ballina Community Transport and Social Futures, who consulted with the local community to advocate for future funding, as reported in *Northern Rivers Unmet Aboriginal Transport Need*. The project found that there was limited transport in outer regions in the Northern Rivers, with barriers including being discharged from hospital without transport, difficulty to get to educational facilities, employment networks, yarning groups, funerals, sporting activities (Social Futures, 2019).

Goal

The goal of this project was to undertake a scoping project to understand the transport options available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the North Coast NSW footprint who are accessing health care, and to identify any gaps or needs and recommended models.

Objectives

1. Identify services and programs across the Healthy North Coast footprint who provide transport for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
2. Increase awareness of transport options available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are accessing health care across the Healthy North Coast footprint.
3. Identify any gaps or needs in transport options available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when accessing health care across the NCPHN footprint.
4. Review transport cost within the Integrated Team Care (ITC) Program.
5. Enhance collaboration between health services, Aboriginal primary health services, general practices, non-government organisations and transport providers.
6. Work toward reducing any gaps identified throughout the scoping period.
7. Identify culturally safe, accessible and sustainable transport model/s that work.
8. Implementation of proposed recommendations, where applicable.

Methods

The data was collected via a survey for service providers. This collected relevant information to establish which organisations offer transport, to which locations and the eligibility to access this service. This survey was developed within the Healthy North Coast website. The survey was disseminated through local networks across the North Coast NSW region.

Information was also sourced via accessing websites for the transport service providers and seeking information such as eligibility requirements. There were also phone calls and meetings with transport providers, Aboriginal Medical Services, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and non-government organisations to assist with collating information into this report.

The ITC service provider expenditure reports were also analysed to review the transport cost within this program.

Performance measures

- Transport report
- Transport models and recommendations
- Transport resources for service providers and community

Transport services within Aboriginal Medical Services

There are currently three Aboriginal Medical Services that have a specified transport service within their service.

Aboriginal Medical Services with transport officers include;

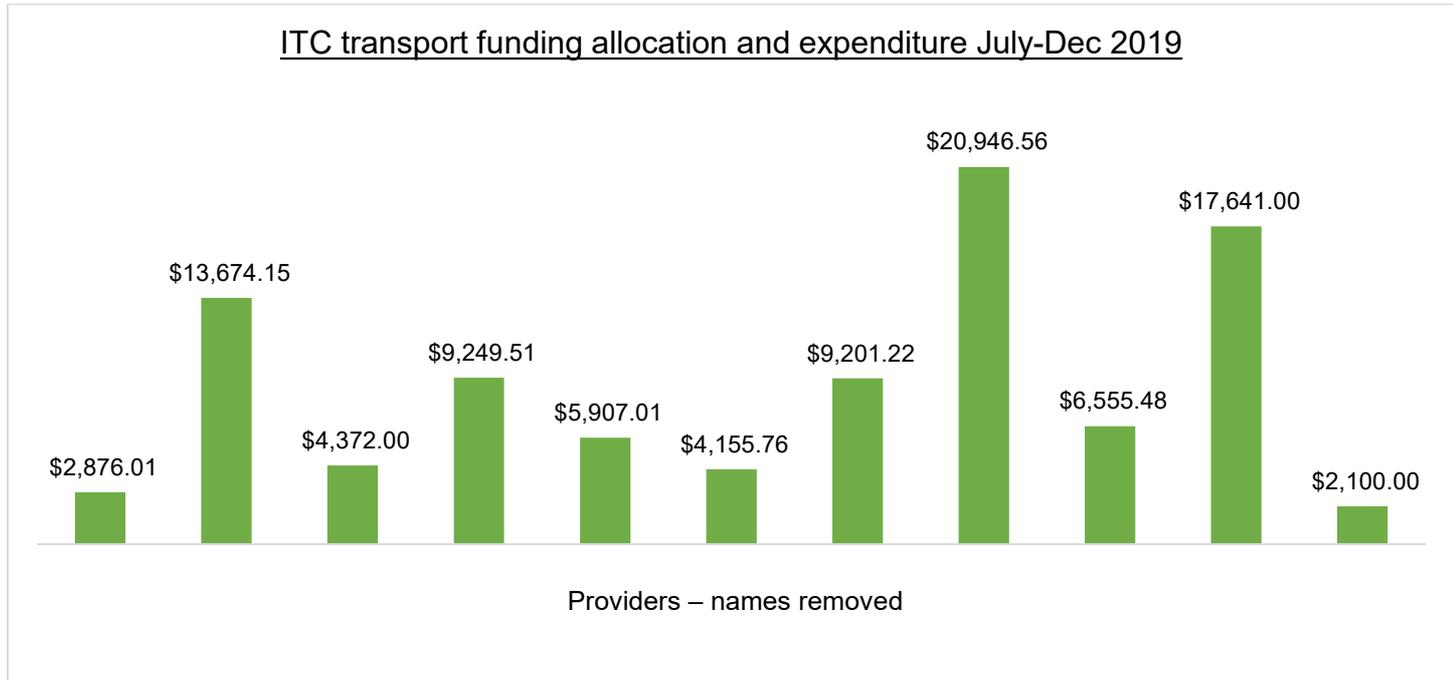
- Durri AMS
- Bulgarr Ngaru
- Galambila AMA

There are some Aboriginal Medical Services that do not have transport within their service due to lack of funding. It was identified that Aboriginal Medical Services may have been funded previously and some Aboriginal Medical Services did not have this opportunity. The transport is now funded internally by the Aboriginal Medical Service. There are some services that are interested in providing transport within their services though funding is an identified barrier, particularly the initial establishment cost of setting up transport within the service.

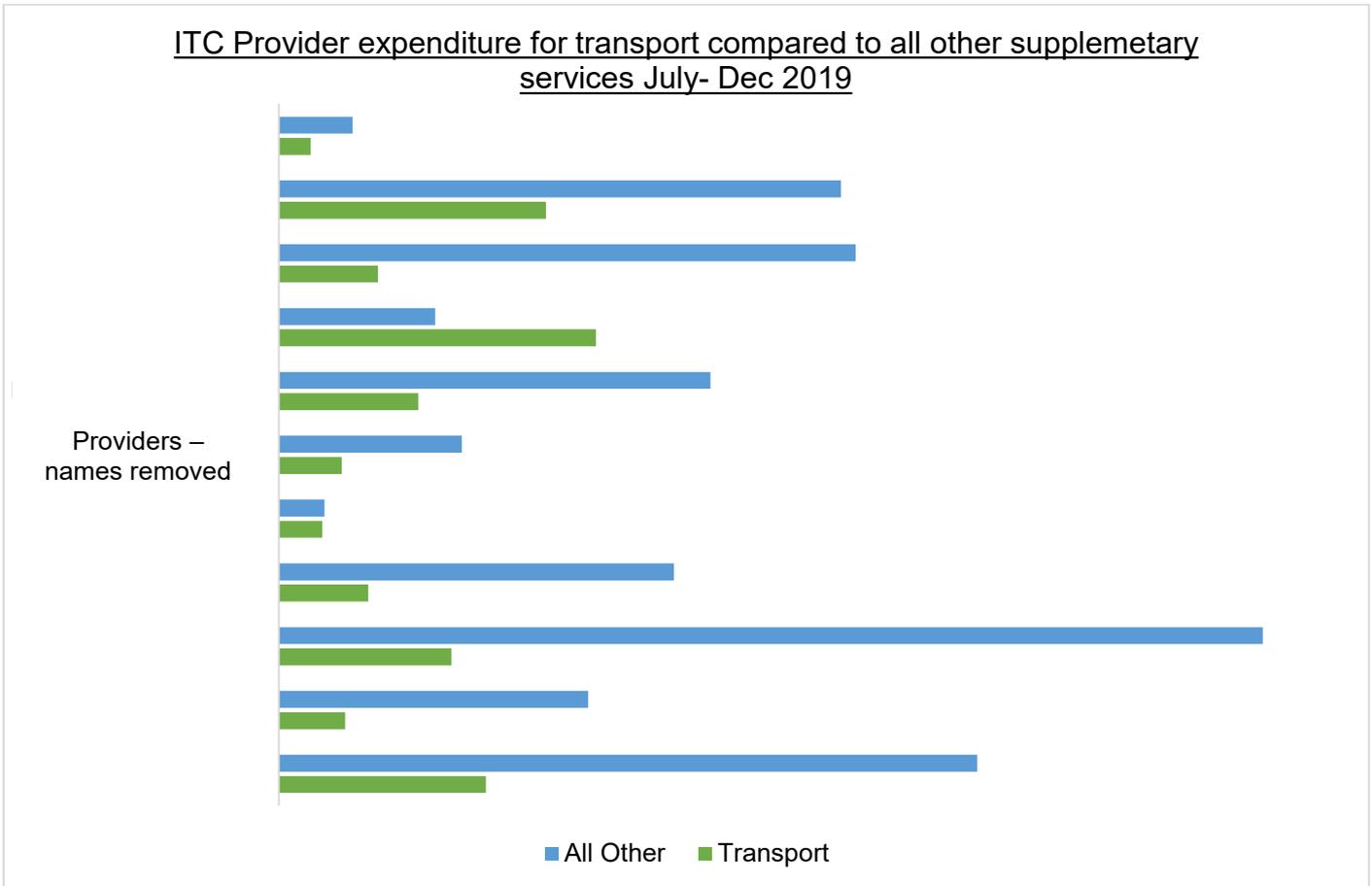
There are great benefits having transport provided within the Aboriginal Medical Service. Clients of the service have reduced transport barriers and are supported to get to their appointments as well as other appointments linked to their health. This is also a culturally safe service being provided by a service and workers that are known to the community. This also includes transport available to isolated communities who access their AMS.

Integrated Team Care (ITC) Program

The ITC Program within Aboriginal Medical Services has brokerage support for clients who require transport related to their chronic disease. This graph shows an example of the cost of transport expenditure within the ITC budget for each ITC service provider.



For the reporting period for July-December 2019, there was a total of **\$96,678.70** spent on transport services for clients of the ITC Program.



For the July-December 2019 reporting period, there was a total of **\$96,678.70** spent on the ITC budget compared to **\$291,567.66** on all other supplementary services. This means **25 per cent** of the total ITC budget is being spent on transport services.

ITC providers have also expressed concern over the large cost of the transport brokerage. Some of these services have then needed to cut back on transport within ITC due to other competing priorities that require funding within this program. Therefore, these transport costs may be smaller due to other competing demand costs of ITC. This is also being looked at within the ITC model by the Aboriginal Health Team. Werin Aboriginal Corporation has had funding cuts within their service and limited transport options available within their area, particularly for those living outside of Port Macquarie (despite these clients accessing Werin). These barriers and lack of services should be included within the funding allocation to ensure equity of service provision and appropriate funding.

Bullinah Aboriginal Health Service utilises local community transport services for their clients. They assist clients with booking this service in advance. They have a good relationship with the drivers and many of the transport officers are Aboriginal people. ITC funding is used if needed where applicable.

The reporting of transport within the ITC Program is not detailed. There may be an opportunity to improve on this, which can assist in providing insight into whether the transport is being provided internally or externally and who their main transport services are brokered to.

Barriers for transport

Some transport providers do not have cultural safety or engagement, therefore are not being accessed

There are some large discrepancies between the different community transport providers. Some community transport providers have employed Aboriginal people in their organisation, including transport officers. These providers also have a good relationship with Aboriginal Medical Services, the community and other Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. The Aboriginal community accesses these services. Some of these providers also independently seek funding opportunities or identify gaps to their funding bodies, and have then acquired further funding, which reduces barriers and out-of-pocket expenses for their clientele.

Some other community transport providers do not have these processes and systems in place, therefore reducing their cultural safety and engagement for the Aboriginal community. This is reflected in their low access rates by the Aboriginal community.

Limited services / availability and access to public and private transport systems

Across the North Coast, there are many communities that fall outside of public transport services. For some, there may only be one other transport provider available. Some communities rely on school buses as their way of getting into a major town, meaning the community needs to catch the school bus early that morning and then return on the afternoon route. This can be a major barrier for the community.

Navigation through the health system

When accessing the health system, there is often the expectation that clients can get to the service, and transport is not generally provided. This can be a massive barrier for Aboriginal people who are accessing the health system. Renal dialysis patients needing treatment at health services who are impacted by transport is an identified issue. There may be patients who live outside the town where the treatment happens, therefore they may require transport three days per week on an ongoing basis. This is costly for the client, and the appointments may fall outside of the operating hours for community transport providers. Patients who are transport disadvantaged are slipping through the gaps, for example non-emergency health related transport (NEHRT) services have identified that renal patients are not eligible for this service due to the cost burden this may place on funding. This is government funded. The burden then goes back to the Aboriginal Medical Services to cover this cost and reduce this barrier for clients through ITC funding, if available.

Aboriginal people being discharged from hospital without transport has been identified as an issue by a community transport provider. The person may be coming to hospital from another town via ambulance, and is then expected to get themselves home once discharged from hospital. The Port Macquarie Base Hospital Aboriginal Liaison Officer has developed an initiative called the No Way Home project. In these situations, there is funding provided by community transport and eligible persons can be provided with a taxi voucher to get back home. However, there are still issues with this initiative relating to when the liaison officer is not at work, as the project cannot be implemented. The Mid North Coast Local Health District (MNCLHD) is looking to improve this initiative.

Lack of Aboriginal organisations registered as transport providers

There are only four Aboriginal-specific transport providers registered across NSW.

Some Aboriginal Medical Services offer transport within their service, however this is funded internally. Other Aboriginal Medical Services are unable to provide this service because it is not funded.

There should be more equitable approaches and opportunities for Aboriginal community-controlled service providers to be registered as a provider.

Cost of transport providers

The cost of transport for the community can be a barrier in accessing services. This cost also extends to service providers such as Aboriginal Medical Services, who are spending large amounts of money for transport services for their clients.

Summary of needs

Hastings Macleay region is limited when compared to other communities across North Coast NSW. Linked Community Transport, who provide transport services across the Hastings (Port Macquarie) Macleay (Kempsey) region, has expressed difficulty getting Aboriginal people to access their services. They have promoted their offerings, but the service is underutilised by the Aboriginal community when compared to other areas. After several discussions with Aboriginal community and stakeholders it has been identified that the model used within Linked Community Transport for Port Macquarie and Kempsey is not suited for Aboriginal people across the region, so the community is not accessing the service. Bellbrook has a large Aboriginal community located 52 km from Kempsey. There is currently no transport being provided. Previously, transport was provided one day per week for shopping by Booroongen Djugun. Due to unavailability of funding, this service can no longer be provided. Other communities in the northern region, Cabbage Tree Island have transport provided five days per week by community transport. All other remote Aboriginal communities across the North Coast have transport provided at least two days per week. Durri Aboriginal Corporation Medical Service is also providing transport for their clients to access health care services. They service Bellbrook if transport is required.

Werin Medical Clinic does not provide transport services for their clients. Wauchope is 20 km from Port Macquarie and clients of Werin have no support to attend appointments in Port Macquarie. Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land Council has expressed concern received from the community regarding barriers for transport between Wauchope and Port Macquarie for health appointments, including high use of taxis and this not being the preferred option expressed by community. Bunyah has expressed interest in providing transport for their community, though funding is a barrier.

Renal dialysis patients do not always have transport to attend dialysis appointments, in particular those community members who live outside of town they receive their treatment, eg., living at South West Rocks and receiving treatment at Kempsey. This is also specifically relevant to Aboriginal people

who are under the age of 50 and therefore do not qualify for My Aged Care and support from other services. Transport for renal patients is not provided under NEHRT.

There are no Aboriginal people employed within the Health Transport Units at Northern NSW Local Health District and MNCLHD. Given the complexity of transport and the impact and barriers around transport for Aboriginal people when accessing health care, it is important that Aboriginal people are employed within this department to ensure that an Aboriginal perspective, cultural safety, collaboration with stakeholders and equity are applied within this service.

Integrated team care program providers are impacted by the availability of transport providers and associated costs. For example, if an AMS has limited transport providers available, taxi vouchers may be the only option. Another AMS has identified they utilise a limousine service as this is the cheapest option in their area. This places more financial burden for transport onto the ITC funding and takes away from competing health costs within this program.

Some ITC providers have had to reduce their transport offered to clients due to the associated costs. With more supported transport programs and initiatives across the North Coast, ITC providers would be able to access these initiatives. This will then reduce the associated cost on ITC funding.

Due to ITC funding cuts and competing priorities, Werin Medical Clinic has had to reduce their provision of transport. This is concerning when you look at the limited availability of culturally safe transport available to both the Port Macquarie and Kempsey regions (as Werin also provide mainstream ITC services to Kempsey). Werin also has no culturally safe services to refer ITC clients who need transport, and their reduced budget means all of their transport services are external to the organisation.

There is also a risk that the ITC funding may cease after June 2021, which may create further barriers, particularly for Aboriginal people with chronic conditions who require transport assistance.

Recommended transport models

Aboriginal community- controlled approach

Some communities have a community bus. Community transport supports these initiatives in some locations. This is particularly utilised in communities across the Lismore region. Aboriginal people within these communities drive the bus. These initiatives have been implemented from licensing programs, allowing community members to gain their licence to drive the bus. The need for more community members who are able to drive the bus has been identified. This can provide further sustainability and options.

This approach is very limited across the Port Macquarie and Kempsey areas, with no communities that have access to a bus. Bellbrook is a great example where this could be explored. A community development approach allows the community to have broader access to services and programs, as well as providing the opportunity to facilitate their own services.

This builds community capacity, increases sustainability and can reduce the cost burdens on service provisions or programs such as ITC.

Bunyah Local Aboriginal Land Council in Wauchope is more than willing to support their community with transport, however funding has always been a barrier.

There may also be other Aboriginal community-controlled organisations that have vehicles and are interested in providing transport to community.

This model should be explored for Hastings Macleay as a pilot for Bunyah LALC and Thungutti LALC.

Aboriginal Medical Service transport service

As mentioned, there are currently three Aboriginal Medical Services that provide transport. Transport provided through the Aboriginal Medical Service assists the Aboriginal community who access these services immensely. There are reduced barriers for the clients of these services to attend appointments, as this is a culturally safe service accessible to all clients no matter where they reside. This can reduce costs, limiting the need to fund external transport providers and utilising this funding for occasions where patients need to travel outside of the area to attend treatment, etc.

Aboriginal Medical Services with their own transport fund this internally and do not receive any external support, outside of ITC funding. Given the lack of transport-specific funding allocated to Aboriginal Medical Services, this may reduce the transport services that are offered internally. Additional funding may increase the uptake and support a broader, more sustainable transport model within Aboriginal Medical Services. Funding to Aboriginal Medical Services can also be based on identified needs, such as not having transport within their Aboriginal Medical Service and an identified lack of culturally safe transport services within the region.

This may not be needed for all. For example, Bullinah Aboriginal Medical Service has a strong relationship with Community Transport as this service is very culturally safe and accessible, therefore their clients are referred to community transport if required. Bullinah has identified that this model works well for their service and community.

ITC transport should also be included within the ITC review, taking into consideration the recommendations and needs identified within this report.

Culturally safe and cost-effective transport services

The transport providers across the North Coast include:

- Linked – Port Macquarie and Kempsey region
- Community Transport Company – Coffs Harbour region and Nambucca Valley
- HART Services – Lismore Shire
- Tweed, Byron, Ballina Community Transport

Some community transport providers engage well with the Aboriginal community and stakeholders. These services provide an Aboriginal community transport service and have local Aboriginal transport officers. These services also have good communication systems with Aboriginal organisations such as the local Aboriginal Medical Services, making for a good coordinated approach to assisting clients booking transport.

However, some providers need to improve in this area and incorporate more cultural safety within their service. This includes employing Aboriginal people to support the implementation of a culturally safe service provision, deliver services to community that are accessible, having Aboriginal driving buses and having a working relationship with Aboriginal stakeholders and community.

Recommendations

1. Increase the number of transport options available to Aboriginal communities across the North Coast that are culturally safe, cost effective and accessible for the Aboriginal community.
2. Investigate an Aboriginal organisation as a pilot site to assist with the transport gaps in the Port Macquarie and Wauchope area. If this is successful, there may be potential to showcase these outcomes to Transport for NSW and get them registered as a provider or seek alternative funding options.
3. Investigate transport solutions for Bellbrook with LALC and community to develop a plan/solution.
4. Investigate funding enhancements for Aboriginal Medical Services who do not have transport services within their service, based on the identified need.
5. Incorporate the identified needs and recommendations from this report to establish provisions for transport brokerage within the ITC model.
6. Seek funding opportunities and cost-effective solutions to enhance transport services for Aboriginal people and communities.
7. Work towards a solution for renal dialysis clients with transport barriers.
8. Implementation of the No Way Home project into other hospitals across the region, if funding can be sourced.

Risks/Limitations

- Lack of culturally safe transport services available in specific regions
- Some services not participating in the discussions regarding transport
- Cost of the transport service for clients
- Transport providers do not improve the cultural safety and accessibility of the service
- Unable to implement the recommendations

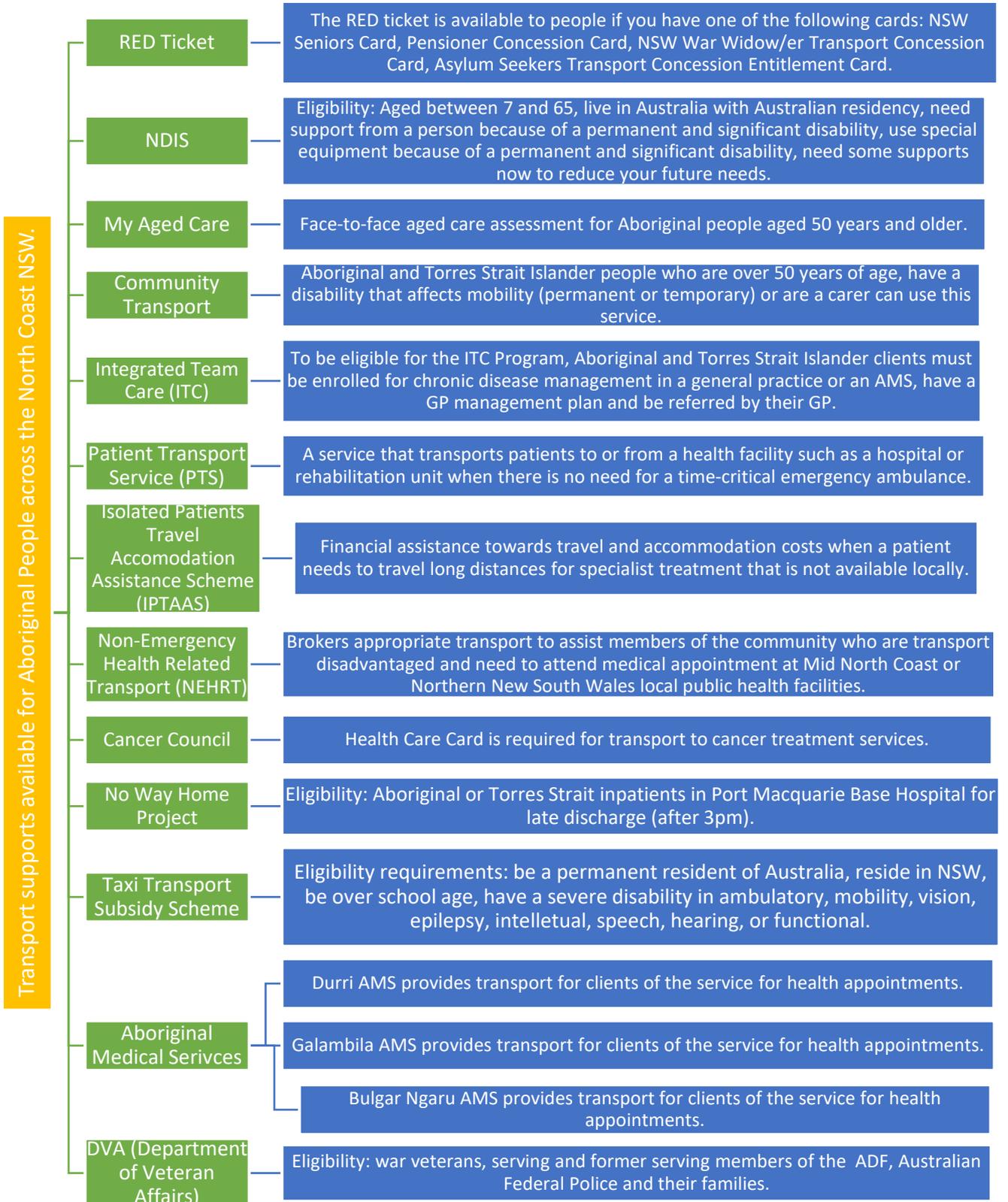
Appendices

Appendix 1: Transport availability for remote Aboriginal Communities

Tabullum/Jubullum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Community Transport Bus two days per week
Muli Muli	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Community Transport Bus two days per week
Cabbage Tree Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Community Transport Bus five days per week
Malabugilmah	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Community Transport Bus two days per week
Bonalbo	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Community Transport two day per week
Woodenbong	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Community Transport Bus two days per week
Box Ridge Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Community Bus (through LALC)?•HART youth travel support
Bowraville	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Daarimba Maara transport•Community transport
Bellbrook	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•There is no transport provided

This identifies the need that Bellbrook community are greatly disadvantaged by transport, having no transport services provided to community. All other isolated communities across the North Coast have transport services available at least two days per week.

Appendix 2: Transport supports available for Aboriginal people across North Coast NSW



Community transport providers

Port Macquarie and Kempsey Linked Community Services

Provides affordable and reliable transport services to community groups and individuals within their service area. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are over 50 years of age, have a disability that affects mobility (permanent or temporary) or are a carer can use this service.

Coffs Harbour Community Transport

Coffs Harbour Community Transport offers Aboriginal community transport with a male and female driver.

Transport to and from Bowraville to attend medical, social, sporting or cultural events is also provided in this area.

Clarence Community Transport

Clarence Community Transport aims to close the gap in access to appropriate transport options for Aboriginal communities within their region.

They have a dedicated Aboriginal Transport Development Officer committed to working with and meeting the individual needs of the Aboriginal community. Clarence Community Transport can help with transporting younger Aboriginal people with disabilities and their carers, Aboriginal people over 50 years old with mobility problems, and with transport to funerals and cultural events.

Eligible Aboriginal individuals and groups can use these services to get to medical appointments, shopping, social outings, cultural events, visiting, clubs and other destinations.

For more information, call their Aboriginal Transport Development Officer on 02 6643 5200.

Hart Services

Provides medical appointment fuel cards, individual and medical transport, group transport for community events, and funeral transport assistance (eligible for up to \$80 fuel vouchers).

For more information, contact Community Engagement Coordinator Kyle Bell on 02 6628 0260 or 02 6628 6000.

Tweed, Byron and Ballina Community Transport

Prioritises the needs of Aboriginal clients who require assistance getting to medical appointments and supports Aboriginal people to access social and cultural events where able.

Six day a week shopping access bus from Cabbage Tree Island to Ballina and return. Download the [Cabbo Bus timetable](#).

Transport brokerage, support, and assistance available

Regional Excursion Daily (RED) tickets

Provides eligible concession card holders with unlimited daily travel within their rural and regional networks for just \$2.50. The ticket is valid until midnight on the day of purchase and is available to buy from the bus driver.

The RED ticket is available to people who have one of the following:

- NSW Seniors Card
- Pensioner Concession Card
- NSW War Widow/er Transport Concession Card
- Asylum Seekers Transport Concession Entitlement Card

Free travel

People are eligible for free travel if they hold one of the following cards:

- NSW Blinded Soldier Pass
- World War 1 Veteran's Widows Free Pass
- Vision Impaired Person's Travel Pass
- Ex-Member of Defence Forces Transport Concession Entitlement Card

Patient Transport Service (PTS)

Transports patients to or from a health facility such as a hospital or rehabilitation unit when there is no need for a time-critical emergency ambulance.

Phone:

- 1300 719 327 (07:30 – 19:00 Monday to Friday)
- 1300 233 500 (after 19:00 weekdays and weekends)

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/transport/pages/default.aspx>

Isolated Patients Travel Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS)

A NSW Government scheme providing financial assistance towards travel and accommodation costs when a patient needs to travel long distances for specialist treatment that is not available locally.

Phone: 1800 478 227 – Press 2 for NNSW and MNC LHDs

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/transport/pages/default.aspx>

Non-Emergency Health Related Transport (NEHRT)

Brokers appropriate transport to assist members of the community who are transport disadvantaged and need to attend medical appointments at Mid North Coast or Northern New South Wales local public health facilities.

Phone: 1300 552 961

Cancer Council

Transport to cancer treatment. A health care card is required to be eligible. Referrals from Mid North Coast Cancer Institute or direct to Cancer Council.

No Way Home Project

This program is for Aboriginal or Torres Strait inpatients at Port Macquarie Base Hospital for late discharge after 3pm. Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer activities this process. This service is funded by Community Transport.

NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme)

The NDIS can provide all people with disability with information and connections to services in their communities such as doctors, sporting clubs, support groups, libraries and schools, as well as information about what support is provided by each state and territory government.

To be eligible for the NDIS:

- Aged between 7 and 65
- Live in Australia and have Australian residency
- Need support from a person because of a permanent and significant disability
- Use special equipment because of a permanent and significant disability
- Need some supports now to reduce your future needs

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/what-ndis>

My Aged Care

The first step to access government-funded aged care services is to check your eligibility for a face-to-face assessment. People can call the contact centre staff to talk about their needs on 1800 200 422. Or apply online: <https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/assessment>

Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme

Eligibility requirements: be a permanent resident of Australia, reside in NSW, be over school age, have a severe disability in ambulatory, mobility, functional, vision, epilepsy, intellectual, speech, or hearing. The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme is a docket system. TTSS provides a subsidy of up to half the metered fare, to a maximum of \$60 subsidy per trip. Only one travel docket can be used per

journey. When people apply for TTSS, they will be sent docket specific to their needs. When they travel, handing the driver a completed docket will cover 50% of the fare (up to \$60). Passengers pay the remaining fare.

<https://transportnsw.info/travel-info/ways-to-get-around/taxi-hire-vehicle/taxi-subsidy-scheme>

Department of Veteran Affairs

Delivers government programs for war veterans, serving and former serving members of the ADF, Australian Federal Police and their families.

DVA may provide financial assistance with travelling expenses, including meals and accommodation for DVA clients and their medically required attendant to attend a health provider for medical treatment within Australia.

DVA may also arrange transport under the Booked Car with Driver (BCWD) Scheme for travel to approved treatment locations. The BCWD Scheme contracts local taxis and hire cars to transport eligible clients to and from their permanent or temporary residence at the time of their medical appointments.

<https://www.dva.gov.au/providers/what-you-need-know/veterans-transport-information>

References

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