

## Getting patients to and from urgent after-hours care in the Grampians region: the role local taxi providers can play

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**Aim:** To provide cost savings in the health dollar spend in our region by providing transport to patients who would otherwise require non-emergency ambulance transport to or from urgent after-hours care, or who would put pressure on our local hospitals by being admitted due to lack of transport options in the after-hours period.

**Methods:** Most rural townships have a local taxi service that operates in some or all of the after-hours period. We negotiated with these local taxi companies to provide transport for patients who need to get to or from urgent after-hours care but where an ambulance is not clinically required. Transport is coordinated by the local Patient Streaming Service provider, an existing local call centre provider. We liaise with and promote the service to all the local health providers to ensure they are aware of the service and encourage the use of it, including General Practice, Health Services and Ambulance Victoria.

**Results:** Since its commencement in July 2013, 734 transports have been coordinated at a total cost of \$30,807 or an average cost of \$42 per transport. This is a significant saving of the health dollar as patients are not required to be admitted to hospital, subjected to lengthy stays in the ED or requiring transport by ambulance. Getting patients out of the ED after treatment reduces bed block, reduces the pressure on the system and frees up staff to see to more patients.

**Conclusions:** By utilising existing providers we have designed a fully integrated after hours transport system that is effective at reducing the impact on the health dollar in our regional and rural areas without putting pressure on other areas of the health service.