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06 May 2024

Honourable Matt Doocey  
Minister for ACC  
Associate Minister of Manatū Hauora Ministry of Health

Kei te rangatira, tēnā koe,

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves. Brain Injury New Zealand is the national body representing 14 regional organisations throughout the country. As a national voice of those affected by brain injury in NZ, we provide advocacy, education and support to people who have sustained a brain injury (e.g., via a traumatic or medical event) and their families and whānau.

You have spoken publicly about your experiences of brain injury, and gaps in services, and we commend your dedication to open dialogue about mental health and brain injury.

Brain Injury New Zealand wish to bring to your attention an issue that has a major consequence to all clients affected by brain injury along with all other ACC Claimants.

As Minister for ACC, as well as Associate Minister of Manatū Hauora Ministry of Health, we are sure that you are aware of the financial difficulties people face when they need to travel, potentially over significant distances, to access healthcare services following brain injury. Travel is often required to access specialist and essential healthcare following brain injury, Attendance at in-person assessments is commonly required to receive financial, rehabilitation, and carer support. Consequences of failure to attend appointments, rehabilitation treatment, and assessments can be widespread, including the denial of an ACC claim, delayed and less effective recovery, more time away from work or education, and increased and prolonged negative impacts on the families and whānau of those injured. Adequate financial assistance to travel to appointments can be the difference between someone accessing essential healthcare following injury, or going without the support they need.

We applaud the recent increases by the Ministry of Health, whereby effective from 01 April 2024 reimbursements have increased to 34 cents per kilometre, and accommodation reimbursement to \$140 per night. This increased financial assistance will allow more people to access care and support that they are entitled to receive and will lead to long term benefits for many people with brain injury and their families.

In contrast, despite the on-going cost-of-living crisis and significant increases in the cost of fuel and accommodation, ACC travel reimbursement rates have not been updated since 2009. If a person needs to travel to access healthcare after injury, ACC currently reimburses mileage costs at a rate of just 29 cents per kilometre. If accommodation is required, ACC has a standard reimbursement rate of \$57.55 per night, with no financial support at all for any attending support person.

Clearly, current ACC mileage and accommodation rates do not reflect actual costs incurred by people and their families when accessing essential healthcare services. Inadequate rates of travel and accommodation reimbursement by ACC create significant barriers to accessing support following injury, especially for low-income families and people living in rural areas. Brain Injury New Zealand urges ACC to increase travel and accommodation rates to at least match the level of Manatū Hauora, to enable all ACC claimants to access essential treatment and support as covered under the ACC legislation.

Can you advise if reimbursement rates for travel and accommodation offered by ACC are on the agenda to be reviewed?

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the issue further, and the needs of those impacted by brain injury more broadly. Please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Sincerely,  
Ngā manaakitanga,

LA

Lync Aronson  
President Brain Injury New Zealand