



Opposition pledges overhaul of PATS scheme

MP: fair go in the bush

JOSH BURROWS

THE family of slain Yalgoo farmer William Rowe has welcomed a State Opposition pledge to introduce exceptional circumstances payments under its proposed overhaul of the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS).

The exceptional circumstance payment could be made in cases such as that of Mr Luke Neil who, along with the Rowe family, was forced to charter a \$1500 flight to Perth so Mr Neil could have surgery



Ellen Rowe

after the infamous Christmas Day bashing at Sunset Beach last year.

Under the existing program Mr Neil had to take the burden of the flight's cost and was also left to organise his own transport from the hospital to the airport while in excruciating pain from his broken jaw.

Mr Rowe's widow and Mr Neil's

future mother-in-law, Ellen, has contacted Opposition Minister for the Mid West Brian Ellis to thank him for the help.

"This latest information warms us considerably and brings a smile," Mrs Rowe said.

Mr Ellis said he had negotiated for exceptional circumstances payments following fallout from the Christmas Day bashing, after which Mr Rowe died and Mr Neil suffered a broken jaw and nearly had his ear severed.

The Opposition's plan pledges to spend \$30 million over four years to revitalise PATS and give patients in rural, remote and regional areas better access to specialised medical services.

Mr Ellis said: "The recent tragedy when a family who were attacked at a Geraldton beach on Christmas Day had to charter their own plane to get urgent medical treatment for a young man with a broken jaw shows that the Carpenter government is out of touch with regional people.

"In addition to the changes to the PATS scheme, I have been given a personal undertaking by the Opposition Minister for Health, Dr Kim Hames, that a Liberal Government would provide an avenue for exceptional circumstances to be considered in situations such as theirs.

"This is about giving people in regional WA a fair go and helping them get medical treatment they need."