

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES — FUNDING

**822. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Minister for Health:**

As a mother and grandmother I am concerned that in these tough economic times some of the community services provided by a number of non-government organisations in my electorate might be compromised. Could the minister please advise the action he has taken to ensure that vulnerable groups in the electorate of Scarborough and the community as a whole are properly funded by this government?

**Dr K.D. HAMES replied:**

Some members will be aware that health has had a bit of a tough time in recent months because of leaks coming out of the department. Sadly, it tends to be the case that the leaks are always about bad news. There are never leaks about good news. I have a little bit of good news that I will share with the house—I will leak this good news to the house. I have been keeping it fairly quiet so that I did not get too many people coming to me for more money.

Members will be aware that the government funds significant numbers of non-government organisations. I thank the member for Scarborough for her question and particular interest. One of the issues we were faced with when we were going through the three per cent cuts is what happens with NGOs. I determined that the amount of money provided for NGOs would not be cut; in fact, it would be subject to the usual flow-on rates of consumer price index increases, in the order of 3.55 per cent. I have had some concerns about a few groups in particular for some time. When in opposition, I went to most of the annual functions of three particular groups—Cystic Fibrosis WA, the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Western Australia and the Motor Neurone Disease Association of WA. Those three groups have particular difficulties. The funding for these associations has not changed for many years. They made some complaints about their contact with government when I was in opposition. I was interested in improving the level of funding to these three groups. Children suffer from cystic fibrosis, which is a condition that causes secretions from whatever source to thicken. Traditionally, secretion in the lungs results in respiratory disease and secretion in the pancreas creates problems with the absorption of food. Sufferers of cystic fibrosis die, on average, at about 20 years of age. It is very sad.

Multiple sclerosis and motor neurone disease can strike anybody at any stage of life. It places a huge burden on the partners of those people. To see somebody who has been a lecturer in mathematics not being able to wipe or look after themselves is also very sad and it places a huge burden on their partners. People suffering from these conditions also die at a very early age.

I was determined to increase funding to those three groups, especially the carers allowance.

**Dr J.M. Woollard** interjected.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Yes and I can tell the member that they are very happy with me. I met with them yesterday.

I increased funding by \$200 000 a year to Cystic Fibrosis WA and the Multiple Sclerosis Society and \$140 000 a year to the Motor Neurone Disease Association. I was able to do that because some three-year contracts had expired and that provided me with funding to do that. I also provided extra funding to the Ishaar Multicultural Women's Health Centre, which is in the member for Nollamara's electorate. The member for Albany, who lobbied me intensely about the Albany Men's Resource Centre, would be pleased to know that the government has been able to commit to ongoing funding for that centre.

It has been a great pleasure for me to provide the increased funding. We had some contact with the Epilepsy Association, which wanted some funding to increase awareness of epilepsy in the community. I received in the order of 50 emails from one gentleman over a short time about this. I met with the president of that association and he is happy with this government's support. Over the next three years this government will look to providing additional support for that group. Unfortunately, the government is not in a position to provide additional funding now. There is not sufficient money in the system to do that. The government has been happy to provide whatever funding it can to the organisations I have mentioned. The main difference between other organisations and the three organisations to which I have allocated additional funding is that they involve people who die at an early age and, because of their disease, they put huge pressure on their families and carers. Providing additional funding for carers is something that this government will always strongly support.