

DISABILITY FUNDING AGREEMENT

439. Mr A.P. O’GORMAN to the Minister for Disability Services:

What will be the Western Australian government’s position on the renegotiation of the disability funding agreement with the commonwealth next month?

Mr A.D. McRAE replied:

I thank the member for Joondalup for the question and acknowledge his ongoing support for people with disabilities in Western Australia. The current commonwealth-state-territory disability agreement for this round was established in 2002. It is a five-year agreement. When it was first struck, the agreement was built on the basis of cooperative federalism. Having listened to the Treasurer’s comments and having regard for the negotiations now going on about a new agreement, it is clear that it is becoming another glaring example of the failure of the Howard government to abide by the principle of cooperative federalism. Western Australia has 10 per cent of the population of Australia but receives just under eight per cent of national funding for disability services. In dollar terms, Western Australia is now \$66 million short of what its entitlement would be over the life of the three agreements. I reiterate: \$66 million. The inequity in the system arises from the establishment of the CSTDA some 14 years ago when there was a skew in the funding to Tasmania and South Australia, recognising that those states needed to make up some ground in the provision of services. In spite of the past 10 years of addressing that underfunding, the commonwealth now refuses to correct that malapportionment in the commonwealth-state agreement. The Howard government has had 10 years to make the system fairer.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: Remember what the Treasurer said at the beginning of question time - you can’t have your cake and eat it too.

Mr A.D. McRAE: The member for Avon should listen to this. I am sure there are people in his electorate who are also concerned about this matter. Western Australian people with disabilities now receive 31 per cent less than every other person in Australia across the whole disability services sector.

Mr P.D. Omodei: This is not just about accommodation, minister.

Mr A.D. McRAE: It definitely is not. It is about therapeutic services, intervention services, diagnostic services - the whole range. The Leader of the Opposition knows as well as anybody in this chamber that the CSTDA deals with the full range of disability services funding and arrangements across all sectors and all types of disabilities. There is no suggestion of anything but that spending on Western Australian people with disabilities is now 31 per cent below the national average allocation on a per capita basis compared with every other person with a disability in every other state and territory. This malapportionment must be corrected. By the end of this government’s second term budget cycle, we will have doubled funding for disability services in Western Australia. Over the life of the CSTDA, the Gallop and Carpenter governments will have allocated \$1.138 billion to disability services. By comparison, the commonwealth government will have supplied \$234 million. It is a disgrace.