

COMMUNITY PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES — ADULT REHABILITATION CLASSES

**426. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Health:**

I understand that the Liberal–National government has been provided additional funding to allow Community Physiotherapy Services to continue the provision of rehabilitation classes for adults. Can the minister please confirm that this important initiative will continue?

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

That is an excellent question. There has been some confusion in the community about what is happening to Community Physiotherapy Services. It is something with which I became involved back in 2005, in opposition, when the then Minister for Health proposed to cut Community Physiotherapy Services and stop it. There was a huge community outcry about that, including by me on behalf of my constituents, and the end result was that the minister did a backflip and reinstated the program. It sounds a bit familiar, does it not, Treasurer? He reinstated the program because of community concern. What he did at the time was to change the nature of the program and the sorts of services that would be provided to new clients so that it would be much more focused on people with, for example, acquired brain injury, Parkinson's disease and the like, but grandfathered the change so that all those who had been receiving balance training through physiotherapy—which is a very good program that helps people keep their balance, reducing the risk of falls and hence the risk of hip fractures—would continue to receive that service for the rest of their lives.

This government continued that, but four years ago the commonwealth government came along with a commitment to a significant increase in funding through the national partnership agreement, particularly focusing on that end of the spectrum—those coming out of hospital who had severe problems and who needed assistance in finding their balance and working within the community. At the end of that four-year agreement with the commonwealth government—I think it was a Council of Australian Governments agreement—it withdrew its funding. I wrote to the federal Minister for Health and Medical Research, Tanya Plibersek, pleading with her to continue that funding and saying how important this particular service was, but I was unfortunately not successful. However, we have received cooperation in the last two weeks from that federal government department, which has allowed us to re-use some other national partnership funding to put back into that service so that we can keep it going. Almost \$1 million has come back from the commonwealth government into the system so that we can keep that service going. More than that, after having discussions with that department, it actually went beyond the amount of money it had because there was so much demand, so today I have committed to put in further state government funding to make sure that we can meet that demand. We are doing that out of the growth funding that has been kindly provided by the Treasurer—the seven per cent growth funding in health expenditure, which will give us the capacity to increase funding for Community Physiotherapy Services so that it can grow even bigger. It is a fantastic program that provides an enormous amount of support for those who need passage back into the community, often after having suffered a stroke, Parkinson's disease or an acquired brain injury. We are committed to keeping that program going.