

COMMONWEALTH STATE/TERRITORY DISABILITY AGREEMENT

**157. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for Disability Services:**

Will the minister inform the house of the outcome of the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement meeting held yesterday in Brisbane?

**Ms S.M. McHALE replied:**

I thank the member for his question and for his advocacy for families with disabilities in his electorate. I would like to acknowledge Sue Harris from the Developmental Disability Council of WA and Carol Franklin, a parent with a son with a disability, who travelled to Brisbane with me to support Western Australians' claim for a better and fairer deal. I must report to the house that it was a quite extraordinary meeting. First of all, the commonwealth minister kept the jurisdictional ministers waiting for nearly one hour before the meeting could even start, which we all thought was quite outrageous given that it was such an important meeting.

Several members interjected.

**Ms S.M. McHALE:** Do members opposite not agree that it was outrageous to keep ministers waiting for 50 minutes?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Ms S.M. McHALE:** I do not keep people waiting for 50 minutes, and I certainly would not keep ministers waiting for 50 minutes.

Secondly, the commonwealth's position became very clear that it is no longer interested in a multilateral agreement with the states. The commonwealth minister sought to play off families in Western Australia against families in other jurisdictions by trying to suggest that they negotiate on a state-by-state basis.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** So you failed again, minister!

**Ms S.M. McHALE:** On a number of occasions now the Leader of the Opposition has referred to negotiations with the commonwealth. I remind him that he was part of the negotiations that negotiated into the agreement the inequity for Western Australia. That inequity is that Western Australia comprises 10 per cent of the population but receives eight per cent of the funding. We have had to deal with that inequity since the first agreement. The Leader of the Opposition negotiated part of the second agreement, which negotiated in and maintained that inequity. If the agreement did not contain that inequity, Western Australia would be in a far superior position.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** Why don't you tell the truth?

**Ms S.M. McHALE:** The truth of the matter is that this government has increased the funding -

**Mr P.D. Omodei** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I ask the minister to take her seat. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the third and final time.

**Ms S.M. McHALE:** As far as I am concerned, the Leader of the Opposition is full of hot air. He may try to denigrate members on this side, but he fails abysmally.

In the five years from 2001 to 2006 this government has increased the budget by 104 per cent. At the same time, the commonwealth's contribution to Western Australia has reduced from 18 per cent to 15 per cent. This government is not prepared to be the architect of the demise of the agreement. Each jurisdiction, state and territory, is united in its commitment to ensure that it gets a fairer deal for people with disabilities and to not break up the agreement.