

ACCOMMODATION SERVICES, FEDERAL FUNDING

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

What does yesterday's federal budget do to specifically address the unmet need for accommodation services to assist ageing carers and people with a disability in Western Australia?

Ms S.M. McHALE replied:

I thank the member for his question and his concern for very vulnerable people in our community.

The federal budget for people with disabilities falls well short of community expectations. Although I acknowledge that it recognises the plight of many carers, the short answer to the member for Joondalup's question is that it does absolutely nothing to further relieve the pressure on and anxiety of parents who need permanent alternative accommodation for their sons and daughters. That is the essence of the Australian budget for people with disabilities. I acknowledge that carers will get a one-off payment, but it is not sustained. That will not help ageing parents. The Howard Government has not done the right thing by people with disabilities, as there is no substantial increase in recurrent funding. There is an indication in the budget of support for respite care, but the sting in the tail is that the States must pay for half of it. In other words, the State must pay for the federal Government's budget announcements. Is that a commitment to people with disabilities? I think not. Unfortunately, the promise of respite is only half funded. The commitment pales into insignificance when compared with the major announcement that our Government made last week. Over the next four years, more than \$25 million in recurrent funding will go to assist more than 450 people with disabilities.

Let us look at what the sector said about our budget and what it wants from the federal Government. Mrs Mary-Louise Allen, President of the Developmental Disability Council of WA, said that the increases in our state budget will go a significant way towards ensuring that people with a disability, and their families, can exercise their basic human rights and enjoy the quality of life that our community expects for all its members. DDC also called on the federal Government to match our commitment and our leadership for a lasting resolution of unmet need. Has the federal Government done that? The answer is no.

As I said at the outset, the federal Government has recognised some of the pressures on carers. That is welcomed. I pay tribute to the work of Judy Brewer-Fischer and Carol Franklin from Western Australia. The announcements in the budget yesterday fell well short of the expectations of families, who were anticipating more help. Quite frankly, the federal budget falls well short of our Government's commitment to people with disabilities.