

## **PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT FOR DISABILITY SERVICES TO CENTRAL AUSTRALIA**

*Statement by Minister for Disability Services*

**MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Disability Services)** [12.15 pm]: For many years the indigenous people of central Australia have been a section of the community that literally has been out of sight, out of mind. However, a landmark agreement between this state, South Australia and the Northern Territory will ensure these people receive better services to cope with the many problems they face through isolation and social injustice.

Two weeks ago in Alice Springs I signed a partnership agreement between the three governments to provide disability services to the people from the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjarra and Yankunytjatjara lands, commonly known as the NPY lands. This agreement means we will have a coordinated approach that will ensure improved disability services for people in the region over the next four years. About 6 000 people in more than 20 communities from these three groups live in a region covering 350 000 square kilometres across Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. These people have lived in this region since the earliest formation of our continent and they have deep-rooted cultural, social, economic and family links with each other and the land. This bond was formed long before the introduction of state and territory borders and this tripartite agreement recognises that dotted lines on a map should not act as a barrier to accessing disability services. We estimate that more than 200 people in the region need varying levels of support from disability services. The total number of people with disabilities is possibly even higher, given the level of social problems, including petrol sniffing - which was recently highlighted - alcohol, trauma and mental health issues within these communities.

I am pleased the Gallop government has been able to show in yet another concrete way how committed it is to working together with others to make sure that disadvantaged communities, like those in Australia's central lands, do not miss out on the services and support they need. The government's commitment in this state is clear: over the first four years of this government and the four years of the forward estimates, it provided an additional \$122 million recurrently for disability services - a massive 73 per cent increase. Much of the funding will be directed to the unmet need for accommodation support to beat the targets set in our accommodation blueprint.

While this government can be proud of its record, the federal government should hang its head in shame. At a time when this country has a \$13 billion surplus and can most afford to help the disadvantaged in our community, Peter Costello turned his back on them in this year's budget. I believe the state government is meeting its commitment to Western Australians with disabilities and their families. It will continue to work in partnership with all stakeholders to create a welcoming and inclusive community. I see my next challenge as ensuring the federal government does the same.

I pay tribute to Hon Tom Stephens and Carol Martin for the tremendous efforts they have made to achieve this end.

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** The minister should acknowledge them by their electorate, not their Christian name and surname. You have not told us how you will deliver that service.

**Mr R.C. KUCERA:** I table a copy of that agreement. Also, I accept the rebuke from the member for Hillarys. I should have referred to the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara and the member for Kimberley.

[See paper 701.]