

RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

445. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth:

I refer to the minister's remarks in *The West Australian* on 20 February 2003 in relation to residential accommodation for people with disabilities indicating that the Government has managed to get more than 150 people into accommodation in the past two years, but that she understands that this gain has been eroded in part by the closure of a small number of accommodation places.

- (1) Is the minister aware that the latest Disability Services Commission annual report states that the number of residential services provided has actually dropped by 17 places over the past two years?
- (2) Why is the minister misleading families in crisis in the disability sector in Western Australia?

Ms S.M. McHALE replied:

I thank the member for his question.

- (1)-(2) It is interesting that this question should come the day after I pointed out to the Opposition that it has such disregard for the disability sector that it does not receive any focus in its shadow Cabinet. Obviously, it is a bit of an Achilles heel in that the Opposition does not give it priority. The only thing it has control over is its shadow Cabinet, and it does not even give the disability sector focus. On the other hand, if the member had been in the Chamber yesterday, he would have heard that this year we have provided accommodation support for over 90 people, and we will be continuing that this financial year. In fact, we have exceeded the funded target for 2002-03. How has that been done? It has been done by good management, by reviewing the processes, by looking at how we manage vacancies that arise in commission homes and elsewhere, and by looking at how we can group together people with similar disabilities, the outcome of which is better support for families.

I refute the argument from the member and the Opposition that this Government is misleading these families. Far from it. For the first time, we as a Government have provided information to the sector, the families and individuals to the point at which they come to me and say that they have never received as much information. That helps them understand what is a very difficult situation, when people are faced with a son or daughter who has had an accident and has a severe injury and for many reasons can no longer look after himself or herself. Our record on disability stands very clear. We are helping more families by very good management, we are maintaining the growth in our forward estimates, and we are continuing to pressure the federal Government, which once again is not prepared to accept its share of responsibility for the accommodation issue.