

Question on Notice

No. 615

Asked on Wednesday, 18 April 2007

MS MALE MP asked the Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services Queensland, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Seniors and Youth (**MR PIT**T)–

What progress has been made on the new Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement and how will this affect people with a disability in Queensland?

ANSWER:

The third Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement for the period 2002-07 is due to expire on 30 June 2007. In July 2006, Ministers responsible for disability services:

1. agreed to work towards a fourth Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement, which would include measurable outcomes in addition to funding arrangements;
2. reaffirmed commitment to joint funding responsibilities and the provision of a reasonable rate of indexation; and
3. committed to strategies to respond to unmet need and projected future growth.

Last week's Commonwealth budget, for 2007–08, included no substantive new funding to the states and territories for specialist disability services under a fourth Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA).

The forward estimates show that the Commonwealth's contribution will increase by only \$58 million nationally between its existing level of investment in the final year of the current agreement and its projected investment in the final year of a fourth Agreement.

For Queensland, this results in an estimated increase of only \$10 million in Commonwealth funding for state-administered services, which appears to only provide for the continuation of existing initiatives, such as respite for older parent carers, and indexation of 1.8 per cent, rather than a reasonable rate of indexation which has been requested by the sector.

Also, the Commonwealth budget did not include any indication of the matched funding available for additional accommodation support and respite services.

This lack of accountability and transparency by the Commonwealth Government is hindering negotiations for a fourth Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement.

State and territory disability services ministers have repeatedly requested that the Commonwealth minister declare the amount of funding available for a fourth CSTDA in an open and transparent way, so that negotiations can proceed and provide certainty for people with a disability, and their families and carers, about the level of support that is available.

In the past five years, the Queensland Government has more than doubled its funding for disability services to \$523 million.

For the same period, the Commonwealth Government's funding of disability services has increased by a paltry 16 per cent, from \$102 million to \$118 million.

The Commonwealth Government's current level of funding means:

- no new money to meet Queensland's well-documented population growth
- no new money to address the unmet need for disability services
- no change to the paltry indexation rate of 1.8 per cent, which is less than inflation.

Even a report issued in February 2007 by a Federal Senate committee inquiry into the funding and operation of the CSTDA recommends changes to the Commonwealth's indexation formula because it is based on flawed assumptions.

This inequity for people with a disability is compounded by the fact that the Commonwealth Government provides a close to equal, or greater contribution than the State Government under other specific purpose payments, such as the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement and the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, which similarly fund state-administered services to support vulnerable members of our community.