

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **DIGNITY4DISABLED “BROUGH GETS IT RIGHT”**

**04.04.07**

Federal Minister for Families and Community Services should be applauded for the position the Federal Government took at the meeting of Commonwealth, State and Territory Disability Ministers in Brisbane yesterday.

Dignity4Disabled President David Holst explained “Minister Brough has raised the bar and focused the debate right where it should be in regards a new CSTDA agreement. Whilst not entirely supporting his position and also with the qualification of seeing the **volume and** scale of the Commonwealth offer which needs to be very very substantial, these discussions should not be just about what states can pressure the Federal Government to tip in. Clearly there is a major need for the State Governments and the Federal Government to both step up, in partnership, and deliver vastly improved recurrent funding for disability services, especially supported accommodation and the Federal Government has yesterday indicated a willingness to do so.

For states to attend this meeting taking the line that they have done plenty and the Federal government has not done enough is “fantasy bordering on bullshit” to use an Australian colloquialism. There is no state that has satisfactorily addressed unmet need and some ministers including S.A. and Qld. must be positively embarrassed at their states current support levels. S.A. ranks last in support per disabled client \$112 million dollars per annum below national average in recurrent funding and Queensland has the lowest per capita contribution for disabled services of any state suggesting many Qld people with a disability

simply get no support. Queensland Minister Pitt's comment calling previous CSTDA agreements highly successful, is not reflected in public opinion or the recent Senate inquiry into disability support. Western Australia's Disability Minister, the seventh minister appointed in the last three years, reflects the attitude of many states towards disability services.

Mr Brough's position that the additional offer of dollar for dollar support for supported accommodation was cumulative on his previous offer to provide additional funding for the new five year CSTDA agreement reflects a positive carrot and stick approach that has been missing in the CSTDA program since its inception. The Federal government should be congratulated for taking this position

Mr Brough almost certainly understands that many states, including SA, have little or no idea of the quantum of the scale of unmet need, including supported accommodation, which again, has been a major hole in previous CSTDA agreements.

The establishment of hard CSTDA targets that are outcome based and linked to new positions (not accommodation relocations) would be a massive step forward for people with disability in Australia. Again, this has been another shortfall in the current CSTDA agreement.

There is clearly much discussion that is needed, including the total available Federal funds, which would need to be some \$600 to \$800 million recurrent over the next four years from the federal government matched dollar for dollar by the states to put a serious dent in the current extraordinary levels of unmet accommodation need nationally. It is estimated there is an urgent and critical need for an immediate 22,000 disability supported accommodation places nationally, some of whom for clients who have been waiting in excess of 15 years for a position

The other major discussion issue of the adequacy or otherwise of the previous federal offer of \$400 million for the new CSTDA agreement would need significant further discussion. The additional funds on offer for supported accommodation cannot be at the expense of already under-funded other disability services, including respite services and in-home care.

Dignity 4 Disabled would be seriously concerned at a breakdown in a national approach to CSTDA funding. The last thing that people with disability in Australia need is to be left to the whim of premiers or disability ministers whose care and interest in people with a disability and the supply of appropriate services may not be a focus for the current state government. We have already seen a number of states historically, including South Australia, marginalize the current CSTDA arrangements to the detriment of disability services and the collapse of a national CSTDA agreement would significantly increase the chances of this type of inappropriate state government management of the disability system. Clearly, safety nets need to be in place and maintained from a federal level to ensure national standards can be implemented.

It is time that the federal government differentiated between the money it spends across a range of programs to support people with “a disability” and the genuine needs of the severely and multiply disabled covered by the CSTDA agreement. The proliferation of clients receiving a pension questionably called a disability payment distorts and detracts from the availability of appropriate funding for the genuine need of people with a serious and multiple disability, their families and carers. The use of headline numbers by governments to distract debate from the real issues regarding CSTDA services to the seriously and multiply disabled is a tactic that is offensive, inappropriate and should be dropped.

Dignity 4 Disabled calls on all states to accept the federal government's challenge and put serious recurrent funding offers on the table to overcome the shortfall that exists in basic disability services as outlined in the recent Senate Enquiry and to approach the negotiations with the federal government with a "can-do" bipartisan partnership, attitude to providing adequate funding, rather than the current negative approach taken by the states that just federal government should do more.

**D4D would ask that you forward this information to your friends clients and supporters**

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