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### **Disability ministers walk out on Brough. 03/04/2007. ABC News Online**

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## **Disability ministers walk out on Brough**

Federal Disability Services Minister Mal Brough has failed to reach a funding agreement with his state and territory counterparts, who have walked out of a meeting in Brisbane.

Mal Brough ... confident the ministers will come back to the table. (File photo) (ABC TV)

They were demanding the Commonwealth put up an extra \$2 billion in funding over the five-year life of a disability services agreement.

Mr Brough says he was willing to put up the cash but the ministers refused to tell him how they would spend it.

"Unfortunately, having put that offer on the table, the states and territories adjourned the meeting ... came back, gave a written statement and declared the meeting closed without further comment, which I thought was an extraordinary turn of events," he said.

"But I'm sure they'll come back to the table."

ACT Disability Services Minister Katy Gallagher has accused the Commonwealth of pitting the states and territories against each other in a bid to secure extra federal funding.

Ms Gallagher says the Commonwealth refused to put extra money on the table and now wants to negotiate separately with each government.

"What that means to me is that whoever can cut the first deal with Minister Brough will probably do pretty well," she said.

"But it means a person with a disability in Perth might not be as well off as a person with a disability in Sydney, depending on the deal that's cut.

"That's not a fair process. Regardless of where you live in Australia, if you have a disability, you have certain needs."

South Australia's Disability Minister, Jay Weatherill, says the meeting broke down because Mr Brough refused to make an offer for a new five-year funding agreement.

Mr Weatherill says state and territory governments have almost doubled their contribution to disability funding in the past five years.

"We're standing alongside each other and also alongside the disability sector until we get a decent offer from the Commonwealth," he said.

"We've demanded a further meeting with the Federal Minister and we will keep demanding a meeting, and we'll keep campaigning on this all the way to the next federal election."

Queensland Disability Services Minister Warren Pitt says they had no option but to walk out.

He says Mr Brough is trying to rewrite the deal and has been reluctant to say how much money is available ahead of the federal Budget.

"Minister Brough is just playing games now," he said.

"The Commonwealth are being penny pinching at a time when their coffers are absolutely awash."

Mr Brough says he is ready to reach a deal.

"I'm still confident that will happen after today's walk-out," he said.

Another meeting is expected before the federal Budget.

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