

## Govt disability discussions break down

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Discussions between state and federal governments over funding for disability services have broken down.

Federal Disability Services Minister Mal Brough met with state and territory ministers in Brisbane on Tuesday to discuss a new five-year funding arrangement for disability services.

The state and territory ministers want a \$2.1 billion boost to federal funding to cope with the growing demand for specialist services.

Mr Brough said he offered to enter into a 50/50 funding arrangement with the states, provided the money was linked to targets for new supported accommodation places to ensure young people with disabilities were not housed in nursing homes.

"We have left them with an open option to establish what their unmet need is on a state and territory basis, to give us a plan on how to overcome that ... and that the commonwealth would consider funding on a 50/50 basis," he said.

"Unfortunately, having put that forward, the state and territory leaders adjourned the meeting, they caucused for 15 to 20 minutes, returned, read out a statement and declared the meeting closed."

However, state ministers painted a different picture of the meeting, claiming it was Mr Brough who brought the meeting to a premature end.

Queensland's Disability Services Minister Warren Pitt said Mr Brough told the meeting he had "real new money" for housing and respite but he would not disclose a figure.

"It is false for Mr Brough to claim that the states and territories walked out on today's negotiations," Mr Pitt said.

"It was Mr Brough who terminated the negotiations when he refused to outline the commonwealth's offer.

"State and territory disability services ministers are not prepared to be the architects of the demise of the successful CSTDA (Commonwealth State and Territory Disability Agreement)," he said.

Mr Pitt said Mr Brough needed to provide more details on the federal offer before talks could continue.

"Four weeks out from a federal budget, the federal minister must be aware of the amount of funding he has to offer," Mr Pitt said.

Mr Brough said he hoped to hear back from the states and territories on targets to get young people with disabilities out of nursing homes.

"I hope that once they return to their various jurisdictions, sanity prevails, and that they step up to the plate, put forward their plan on how to meet the unmet need," Mr Brough said.

If the ministers failed to reach a consensus by the time the current agreement ended on June 30, Mr Brough said current funding arrangements would continue on a month-by-month basis.

Victorian Community Services Minister Gavin Jennings said the federal government's position was "alarming" as it did not take into account projected growth in demand for disability services.

"The federal government is seeking to index funding at 1.8 per cent but we know indexation of at least 2.9 per cent is needed just to maintain current services," Mr Jennings said.

"The federal government's position is entirely unacceptable to Victoria."

Mr Jennings said more than 3,000 Victorians were waiting for disability services and each year 150 additional people were added to the waiting list.

For every dollar the federal government spends, Victoria spends seven, he said.

AAP