

John Castrilli MLA



Representing the people of Bunbury

It is good to be able to finally welcome some good news.

Over the past month I have repeatedly spoke of the need to support our Country Taxi Operators who provide wheelchair taxi services with no subsidy assistance. Metropolitan taxi operators receive both a subsidy per service provided and up to \$15 000 to assist with modifications for wheelchairs.

Readers will be aware that after years of requests from regional taxi operators to the Minister for assistance, they had come to the point of not being able to financially carry the service any longer. The Country Taxi Operators Association had advised the Minister that without a subsidy the services would be forced to be withdrawn from the 15th January.

The news last Tuesday – DDay - that the Minister had finally given an undertaking that she would provide an interim subsidy prior to legislation going to Parliament, has given this vital service a life line.

I congratulate the local taxi operators on this outcome and once again thank them for their continual service to people with disabilities. My thanks and congratulations also to the numerous people who contacted my office and who stood up to be counted. Once again, people power shows that it is a force to be reckoned with.

I look forward to being able to support this legislation when it is bought into Parliament.

A concern of many parents when our children are born and begin developing is whether they are developing at the “acceptable” rate. Thankfully for the greater percentage, this is the case, however in some cases, a parent will begin to realise that something just isn’t right with their child. This must be a very frightening time. Unfortunately, it is made more frightening when assessments and support is not readily available.

For the past two years I have met with various parents who have been faced with this experience. In June 2006 I assisted the South West Disabilities Coalition to organise a Forum in Bunbury to highlight the needs and lack of services available.

Early intervention is essential. Unless the child receives help early, they will struggle and their competencies will be affected. Apart from the moral and human side of leaving children with a treatable condition go until, in some cases, it is too late, it doesn’t even make sense financially as for every \$1 spent in early intervention, it saves \$7 in future years of treatment on young people.

I welcome with open arms the announcement of additional funding to support early diagnosis for autism, and once again, I congratulate the hard working parents who have fought for this change.

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