

NEUROTRAUMA RESEARCH PROGRAM — FUNDING

**507. Mrs M.H. ROBERTS to the Minister for Road Safety:**

- (1) Was the minister the government's representative on the neurotrauma research program until such time as she became Minister for Road Safety; and, if so, did the minister advise those members at the final meeting of that organisation that she attended that she would be able to get them extra funding and a three-year commitment in her new role as Minister for Road Safety?
- (2) Given that the expert and independent Road Safety Council recommended \$1.7 million worth of funding for the neurotrauma research program, the same amount as last year, why, as minister, did she sign off on less than half that amount in only one year's funding?
- (3) Does the minister understand that to keep research expertise in Western Australia and for long-term projects to proceed, the neurotrauma research program needs a commitment to substantial ongoing funding and not the year-to-year funding, and funding cuts?

**The SPEAKER:** Member, this is a long question.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I have finished the question. It is a very important matter. This is a group that has had its funding more than halved.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:**

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(3) Yes, I was a government appointee on the neurotrauma research program's executive committee. For those members who do not understand what this committee does, it is a committee of people who administer a grants program for research projects that are focused on ways to prevent neurotrauma injury—that is, injury to the head and the spinal column—for people involved in road crashes and on ways for people who sustain a spinal injury in a car crash or any other kind of accident to recover better. These research projects work on methods to get a better recovery and to try to help people recover the use of limbs that may have been disabled as a result of the injury. It is a very interesting program. I valued the time I had on that committee, and I valued the insight into the wide range of research projects that took place as a result of that funding program.

It is true that there was a recommendation to fund that program to the tune of \$1.7 million. I have spoken to the chair of that committee, Professor Bryant Stokes, about how the government can better support some of the research projects. I am not prepared to disclose that conversation to the house at this time, because that conversation is a starting point to look at how we can better support those research projects. Research projects are better funded over a longer period of time. Rather than a 12-month tranche of research, it is in the best interests of those research projects to fund them for longer periods. I have looked at mechanisms to try to facilitate that through not only the road trauma trust account, but also other funding streams, including from the government and the private sector. Generally, medical research is the poor cousin for funding streams from the private sector.