Health Minister Kon Vatskalis has reinforced the Government’s commitment to the Northern Territory’s disabilities sector as he prepares to represent the Territory at the high level Select Council on Disability Reform in Canberra this afternoon.

“I will be ensuring that the Territory’s needs are heard loud and clear,” Mr Vatskalis said.

“Supporting people with disabilities is central to a civil society, and a key area for this Labor Government.

“We are absolutely committed to ensuring a fair deal for all Territorians with a disability. That also means a fair deal for the Territory at the national level.

“The major topic for discussion will be the design of the important National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) so that it meets stakeholder and client expectations.”

Mr Vatskalis will be meeting with Ministers and Treasurers from other jurisdictions to enable the Territory to progress the NDIS initiative.

“NT Government funding for disabilities programs this year totals $67.7 million - an increase of $5.7 million from 2010/2011,” Mr Vatskalis said.

“Over the 2007–2011 period, the NT and Australian Governments together committed an additional $16.7 million through the disability services review for extra resources in areas such as supported accommodation, better case management and additional respite care for families.

“An estimated 40,000 Territorians have a disability, and of these around 14,500 have a severe or profound disability, with an even greater need for assistance with core activities of daily living.

“Having disabilities presents a range of challenges to individuals themselves, as well as their family members, friends, carers and the government generally. Remoteness compounds the challenges in delivering services over distances to communities.

“However, the Government is committed to facing the many challenges and ensuring that we obtain every Commonwealth entitlement, and have our say when disability issues are discussed at the national level.

“That is what I will be doing in Canberra this week, and I will be reporting back to the NT disability sector after the Council meeting.”

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