

Productivity Commission
Disability Discrimination Act

31st August 2003

To the Commission.

My family & I were diagnosed with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS) 4 years ago. We “suddenly” became intolerant to certain chemicals after purchasing a house next to a contaminated site in 1997.

Currently...in Australia, We have NO recognition, NO treatment & NO Aids to help the many sufferers of MCS. They are just left to barricade themselves away from chemicals that surround them, the best they can.

I have personally taken huge steps to reduce & avoid the chemicals we were reacting to. We threw out all perfumes, chemical cleaners, makeup, clothes made from synthetic fibres, books, newspapers, things made from chipboard, nylon, essential oils, art & craft supplies, the list goes on. We moved to a remote part of Australia, isolated for 12 months on an organic farm. We ate Bio-Dynamic Food...food grown using plant based fertilisers & no allowable pesticides. We eventually moved because the blue gum trees were sprayed too frequently.

We relocated to a house beside the ocean, but the town water makes us ill. We spend an extra \$50 a week purchasing bottled water. I work extremely hard getting my family well again. Some days, we can socialise in airy places & upwind of people who use fragranced products or washing powders. Other days I collapse, simply by smelling perfume.

Now, it seems we have to move again. As we have new neighbours, that use deodorants, washing powders & other chemicals that cause intense pain in & around my heart on some days. I cannot afford to move again just yet, and houses to rent that are suitable, are not easy to find.

I am pleading with the commission to recognise this illness so we can get help.

There are 18 million people diagnosed ‘Chemically Sensitive’ in the US. MCS is Recognised by the World Health Organisation, 25 United States Federal Authorities, 10 Canadian Authorities, 28 US State Authorities, 14 Local US Authorities and in more than 30 United States Court Decisions alone...

I would like to know why it is not recognised in Australia?

Those who learn about MCS very early have a chance of almost full recovery--they are few and far between, however, and they must alter their lifestyles to great lengths in order to not relapse.

There should be lessons learned here.....

There is a critical period in this illness, and that is early diagnosis and treatment. Impossible when MCS Is not even recognised.

The mobility impaired have a wide selection of wheelchairs, artificial limbs, modified vehicles & homes, etc.

The visually impaired have guide dogs, talking phones, beeping traffic lights, etc.

The hearing impaired have hearing aids, vibrating traffic lights, etc. –

The chemically impaired have.....? nothing...

People with MCS need reading boxes, wheelchairs, air filters, water filters, environmentally friendly homes, schools, childcare centres, walking aids, tutors, carers, the list is endless.....

The MCS sufferers must barricade themselves away & be given a psychosomatic 'label'. How discriminatory is that?

We cannot enter many buildings or public places, friends homes, and our local hospital says " they cannot accommodate us with our illness".

My children yearn to go to school & socialise with other children. Its simply not possible. Teachers from S.I.D.E. have had to wear gloves or shower before marking work, as the residue from marking books made us ill. They accommodate us well. I have worked as an integration aid in kindergartens & childcare centres. We could not turn away a child simply because they had sensitivities to chemicals.... that's discrimination.

I have done everything that I can afford, treating this illness. I am now at a standstill & need professional advice & assistance that is affordable & practical on a disability pension.

I request the Productivity Commission to consider why the Disability Discrimination Act fails to cater for people disabled by Multiple Chemical Sensitivity and other Chemical Injuries/Environmental Illnesses.

Dianne Sulman & family
Western Australia
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