

**Australian Government Productivity Commission
Disability Discrimination Act Inquiry**

My name Ian Smith
Friend's name Nona Blackburn
Written in Conjunction

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Nona has a severe back injury restricting her from walking normal and has a stooped posture. I am legally blind resulting from clorcoma. I have had laser treatment and surgery on both eyes, but have been left with this disability. One of my worst disadvantages is being in daylight then going into shade. The brighter the day the darker the environments, can take up to 20 seconds for my eyes to adjust. This is spent in total darkness to gradually to my normal blurred tunnel vision. This disability has been instrumental in being hit and run over by a car, breaking my foot.

In Nona's company alone on 4 occasions we have nearly been run over by cars, coupled with Nona's injury we are very disadvantaged together. Tripping over, bumping into people are not unusual along with being abused, laughed at and now in this case drunk by a bouncer. After recent events we are giving our submissions to your inquiry hopefully to prevent more disabled persons or worse. Nona and myself are both Level 3 OHS Reps having spent more that 500 hours each of training.

The series of events that happened on Thursday 8th of December 2003.

I had attended a meeting at Trades Hall in the morning and as a monthly event I met Nona at 12.00pm at the John Curtain Hotel in Lygon St, Carlton. We had one stubby each, we then left to go to the respected Doctors, Solicitors and several other offices. On completion of Nona's appointments we called into the Stork Hotel some 3 hours later when Nona decided to shout me a meal for my birthday the following day. After eating at an Indian Restaurant in Flinders Street, Nona had 30 odd minutes to spare before her train left for Gippsland where she lives. So we decided to have a beer at Young and Jacksons pub opposite Flinders St Station.

We walked up to the pub Nona holding my arm steering us through the people with Nona's restricted walking action and my limited vision. The first bar was crowded so we went to the next around the corner in Swanson Street. The sun was very bright, as we approached the entrance being heavily shaded I felt with my foot to make sure of what steps were there, at this very moment a tall Afro American bouncer said we could not go in being the reason of being drunk. We were shocked, insulted and emotionally devastated to be belittled by a person who had not ever given us a chance to explain our disabilities, after all the places we had been on the day. When we tried to explaining to him our disabilities he had his mind set on his judgement. Then Nona grabbed my wallet and showed him my Blind Disability Support Pension Card. He then realised we weren't drunk and said I should have a sign around my neck with blind written on it. We bought a beer each and he came over trying to explain his ignorance. We were not really interested, his discrimination towards two innocent people had left us totally shattered. Our dignity rock bottom. How could some person

have a job like his and be so hurtful to disabled people. After all we do have some sort of dignity. We drank our beers and left. Both of us badly distressed.

Our Recommendations to the Inquiry:

1. Persons such as bouncers and any person dealing with general public have far more training particularly with public relations and how to deal with conflict.
2. Bouncers to be more responsible for their actions, as well as any publican or venue operator.
3. Employers to have more training in disabled peoples capabilities.