

Qld

13 July 2003

Productivity Commission
Disability Discrimination Act Inquiry
LB2 Collins Street East
MELBOURNE VIC 8003

This is a personal submission to the inquiry into the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* being conducted by the Productivity Commission.

My daughter is a vision-impaired student currently undertaking tertiary studies. This submission is based on her's and our experiences to date.

In the State education system, it was found that the funding for the policy of integration was insufficient to effectively pursue and implement the policy as announced. The teachers and teacher aides were generally excellent but were hamstrung by a lack of funds at the service delivery point. It was only through personal commitment outside of the system that effective learning outcomes were achieved.

In the private education system, my daughter was not allowed to continue with learning the Japanese language from Grade 8, Maths and science in Grade 11 and 12 and Biology in her school cohort in Grades 11 and 12. To complete this subject she was directed back to the State Correspondence School and completed it outside the private school system. She was not allowed to go to camps with her peers and participate in sports like sailing. Equipment went missing from the school in unexplained circumstances. Rules were changed for 1 year to deny her the opportunity that her peers enjoyed.

The cost of adaptive equipment and material is prohibitive. Braille sheets are expensive and because of the size of the Braille cell there are more sheets required than normal print. The BrailleNote that she uses now costs in the order of \$11,500 and funding sources are virtually non-existent. From the Prime Minister down every official and government agency used smoke and mirrors to answer the question. Even funding for the disabled at tertiary institutions comes in a non-transparent packet.

Without an increase in funding, opportunities for the disabled will remain illusory and a thwarted legislative intent.

Access to financial information is difficult if not impossible. Most financial information is in Adobe PDF format and when converted it loses its format. A recent case of requesting a Prospectus in alternative format was ignored. The suggestion from ASIC was to go to a financial planner or a reading service.

The opportunity for independence in casting a vote cannot be accommodated under the Electoral Act. A vision impaired person must rely on a sighted person in order to cast a vote.

In Queensland, a vision-impaired person is not entitled to a disabled parking permit even though they may meet the criteria on the application. When this was adjudicated by the Anti-Discrimination Commission it was upheld even though other lawyers did not agree with the interpretation of s.104 of the *Anti-Discrimination Act (Qld)*.

Finally, a lot of web pages are not accessible to a vision impaired person and there are financial sanctions imposed on persons who do not use the service and have to access those services in person. An example was the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre.

Yours faithfully

Peter Young