

## **Submission To Productivity Commission Inquiry into DDA**

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To the Inquiry

I am writing this submission in order to highlight what I, as a disabled person, consider to be the principle issue in any discussion about the effectiveness of the Disability Discrimination Act and its impact on the disabled community in helping to insure a dignified and equitable way of life. This issue is the ignorance of the general public in the treatment and agency of disabled matters within our community.

I believe in the ultimate decent and fair behaviour of the Australian people and am convinced that the often unfair treatment comprising paternalistic attitudes, lack of empathy, disregard for the economic burdens of disability as well as the lack of recognition of the dignity, and what this entails, that should be afforded all disabled people, is a direct result of the public's ignorance of the dismissive attitude that is held within the community towards the disabled.

For example I have many times been asked to wait outside the checkouts of a retail outlet so my husband can put our shopping through, rather than the retailer go to the trouble of opening the disabled aisle. The ignominy of this is usually lost on the shop assistant.

I have been told by swimming pool managers that my need to access their pool of an evening is not possible as I would be a disruption to their lap swimmers. I have to deal with the lack of access in some of the private organizations and businesses who have not considered disabled access, feeling that as their building is old it is not a problem that they need to address or the dangerous and undignified suggestion by some, that as I am the only disabled person that they are aware of that has requested access, that I and my wheel chair could be carried up the stairs rather than provide a ramp.

I continually live with the isolation that my disability and the public's reticence to interact with the disabled can bring.

All of these problems I have mentioned could be reduced if the public was made more aware of their responsibilities and conduct towards those within the disabled community.

More publicity promoting the dignified treatment of the disabled and the public's responsibility within the Disability Discrimination Act not only legally but morally is needed. Campaigns such as those that are run through the various media outlets that educate on the issues of drug, alcohol abuse and driver responsibility are prime examples of the ongoing public education designed to alter unacceptable social behaviour. This same type of awareness campaign could be initiated to overcome the social issues faced by the disabled. Disabled people from the high profile fields of sport or theatre could be involved in the explanation and demonstration of these issues that so involve the disabled.

Could it even be possible to incorporate an educational unit within the school system that would teach and promote tolerance, empathy, justice and consideration for all the many diverse communities within Australia including the disabled community?

It would be in the best interests of all disabled Australians if the inquiry was to address this question which could help the positive outcomes that the Disability Discrimination Act was designed to accomplish.