



**Australian  
Human Rights  
Commission**

**Age and Disability  
Discrimination Commissioner**

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**The Hon Susan Ryan AO**

30 June 2015

Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

**Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for People who are Blind, Visually Impaired or otherwise Print Disabled**

As a General Principle<sup>1</sup> and key stand-alone article of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>2</sup>, accessibility in its various forms is essential for many people with disability and as a pre-condition to inclusion.

The Marrakesh Treaty will provide accessibility and open pathways for people with disability, which may have previously been closed, due to limited access to print materials. Given the barriers for some people with disability to accessing education, employment, social, cultural and leisure rights, reducing barriers is crucial to a fully inclusive Australia.

Addressing these barriers has been highlighted as a priority for the Government, with the Attorney-General requesting the Australian Human Rights Commission to undertake a national inquiry into employment discrimination. The Willing to Work National Inquiry<sup>3</sup> will specifically look at employment discrimination against older Australians and Australians with disability. The Commission welcomes this Inquiry and the opportunity to identify barriers and practical solutions to achieving greater access to employment. The human rights promoted by the Marrakesh Treaty supports the Government's commitment to providing greater access to publications for people who are blind or visually impaired, which are essential for education and employment opportunities.

In addition to the Willing to Work Inquiry, the Commission has been active in other fora to support information and communication rights for people with disability. I recently provided evidence before the committee reviewing the Broadcasting and Other Legislation Amendment (Deregulation) Bill 2014, as the Commission firmly believes that people with disability are entitled to their right to communication and information on an equal basis as others.

The Commission strongly supports the ratification and implementation of the Marrakesh treaty, and understands that Australia worked actively during the negotiation process.

Australia's commitment to advancing international legal frameworks to improve the lives of people with disability is mirrored domestically through the roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and associated policy reform. Increasing accessibility to publications and media will also assist Australia in implementing our National Disability Strategy, and in particular, Policy Outcome One, which refers to Inclusive and Accessible Communities.<sup>4</sup>

The Commission thanks the Committee for their time with this important treaty and looks forward to the outcome of the review.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Susan Ryan AO ✓  
**Age and Disability Discrimination Commissioner**

T +61 2 9284 9694  
F +61 2 9284 9794  
E [age.discriminationcommissioner@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:age.discriminationcommissioner@humanrights.gov.au)

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<sup>1</sup> *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 2006, art 3. At <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml> (viewed 19 June 2015).

<sup>2</sup> *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 2006, art 9. At <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml> (viewed 19 June 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Willing to Work National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability. At <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/projects/willing-work-national-inquiry-employment-discrimination-against> (viewed 19 June 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Council of Australian Governments, *National Disability Strategy*, 2012. At <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/government-international/national-disability-strategy> (viewed 19 June 2015).