



Mr Peter Hallahan
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Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
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Dear Mr Hallahan

Thank you for your invitation to provide a submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry into the Disability Discrimination and Other Human Rights Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. We recognise that the closing date for submissions has passed, but would appreciate consideration of our input.

The Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) is the peak national non-government organisation representing and promoting the interests of the Australian mental health sector, committed to achieving better mental health for all Australians. The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and its implementation are unsurprisingly of significant interest to our organisation and our stakeholders, as the DDA is the primary piece of legislation proscribing discrimination against people with a mental illness.

The MHCA welcomes the review of this important legislation, and on the whole welcomes the proposed changes, in particular:

- increased recognition of carers in sections 8 and 9;
- clarification in section 4(1) that the definition of disability includes genetic predisposition to a disability and behaviour that is a symptom or manifestation of a disability; and
- recognition of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in sections 4(1) and 12(8)(b).

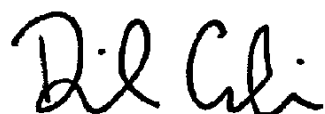
However, the MHCA supports the submission by the Australian Human Rights Commission, and endorses the criticisms and recommendations contained therein.

The MHCA also notes that the DDA is a legal document, and may not be easily understood by laypeople. While it is outside the scope of this inquiry, we strongly recommend that the Australian Human Rights Commission continues to produce plain English guides to the DDA, such as are currently available on its website, suitably updated to reflect the changes that

arise from this legislation. We would particularly welcome separate documents targeted at key interest groups, including people with disability and employers.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss our submission further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "D. Crosbie". The signature is written in a cursive style. To the right of the signature is a vertical line.

David Crosbie, Chief Executive Officer