



The Royal
Society for
the Blind

Response to The Joint Standing Committee on
Treaties Parliament of Australia

**RE: Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works
for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or otherwise
Print Disabled (Treaty).**

The Royal Society for the Blind (RSB) wishes to commend the Australian Government on their commitment and support through the Attorney General's Department over the past 10 years to firstly achieve the creation of the Treaty and secondly to be a leader in signing up to the Treaty in 2014.

The RSB is now seeking the support of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties to ensure the efficient passage through the committee process and subsequently the ratification of the Treaty by Australia as soon as possible.

The RSB, a quality endorsed organisation, with over 130 years of service, is the primary provider of the full range of specialist rehabilitation services to over 12,000 South Australians who are blind or vision impaired.

Members of the Committee would be aware that access to information is the greatest barrier for people who are blind or vision impaired to independently participate in the community and to fully realise their citizenship.

Provision of accessible printed material has been a long term goal of organisations such as the RSB who have over the past 130 years provided accessible information in the form of braille audio, large print and electronic text as technology has progressed over time.

Certainly with the introduction of the internet, digital audio files, large print and synthetic speech people who are blind or vision impaired have been able to enjoy greater access but well over 90% of printed material and information on the internet is still inaccessible.

This Treaty will greatly increase the availability of content, however the Australian Government must continue to be a leader by providing all of their information via websites and printed material in accessible formats of a person's choice. Further to encourage the Australian Community to do likewise and set Standards of information access for all.

Our Services

Adaptive Technology
Child & Youth
Community Education
Counselling
Employment Services
Guide Dog Service
Industrial Services
Library Services
Low Vision Centre
Mobility Services
Outreach Services
Peer Support
Print Alternatives
Recreation & Leisure
Systemic Advocacy

Adelaide

Knapman House
230 Pirie Street
Adelaide SA 5000
8417 5599

Corporate Office

254 Angas Street
Adelaide SA 5000
GPO Box 1855
Adelaide SA 5001
Office 8417 5555
Donate 1800 644 577
Email mail@rsb.org.au

**Industrial & RSB
Guide Dog Services**

11 Blacks Road
Gilles Plains SA 5086
8417 5600

Regional Offices

Mount Gambier
Noarlunga
Port Augusta
Smithfield
Victor Harbor

www.rsb.org.au

The Royal Society for the
Blind of SA Inc.



The RSB also supports the retention of the Commercial Test to check if an accessible version of the work is available. Australian Publishers should be rewarded for providing accessible versions at the same time as printed material.

The RSB supports the approach of the Australian Government to ratify the Treaty without Copyright Law being changed. Further we wish to ensure that current access to inaccessible works are not further restricted but the process of obtaining the source copy for creating an accessible version is simplified and red tape reduced.

The RSB would be pleased to work with the Attorney General's Department and other stakeholder to achieve this goal.

Should the Committee wish to further understand the significance and benefit of ratification of this Treaty to Australians who are blind or vision impaired the RSB would be happy to discuss this with the Committee.

Once again we urge you to expedite this Treaty and encourage the full Parliament to become one of the first 20 countries to ratify and thus bring into force the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled (Treaty).

Yours sincerely

Robert Depold
Deputy CEO