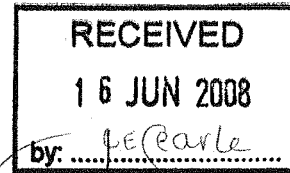
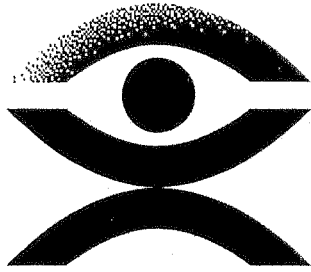


Submission 7
TT 4 June 2008



Blind Citizens Australia

**Comments on the National Interest Assessment for
the UN Convention on the Rights of People with
Disabilities**

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About Blind Citizens Australia

Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) is the peak national advocacy organisation of and for people who are blind or vision impaired. Our mission is to achieve equity and equality by our empowerment, by promoting positive community attitudes, and by striving for high quality and accessible services which meet our needs. As the national advocacy peak body we have over 3000 individual members, branches nationwide and 13 affiliate organisations that represent the interests of blind or vision impaired Australians.

Comments

Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) wishes to reiterate its support for the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities ('the Convention') and the Optional Protocol. As per our initial submission to the National Interest Assessment (NIA), we believe that the introduction of the Convention and Optional Protocol would provide greater opportunities for people with disabilities within Australian society and promote Australia as a leader in human rights in the Asia-Pacific region.

We are supportive of the acknowledgement for the need to provide greater education and training to those people who have contact with people with disabilities on a regular basis; overall change in our society can only be achieved with greater understanding at the individual level. Additionally, BCA supports the further investigation of the suggested range of improvements for Australian society outlined in Section 17 of the Attachment on Consultation.

In Section 11 of the Attachment on Consultation it is noted that the Australian government is considering an

interpretive declaration to clarify that Australia's current immigration practices are not discriminatory, in part because Australia's migration laws are exempt from the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA). BCA is concerned that the exemption of migration matters under the DDA may not be in line with the Convention, and argues that this is a flaw in Australian legislation rather than a genuine legislative attempt to meet the rights of people with disabilities. We note that as of Sunday 15th June 2008, immigration issues or freedom of movement issues have not been subject to reservations or interpretive declarations by any country which has ratified the Convention.

Bearing this concern in mind, BCA is otherwise fully supportive of the Australian government ratifying the Convention and Optional Protocol.