



National Ethnic Disability Alliance

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13 April 2009

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Legal and Constitutional Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

RECEIVED SM
13 MAR 2009
BY: LACA

NEDA Submission to the Inquiry into the draft Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards

Dear Committee Secretary

The National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) is the national peak organisation representing the rights and interests of people from non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability, their families and carers throughout Australia. NEDA is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACCSIA) to provide policy advice to the Australian Government and other agencies on national issues affecting people from NESB with disability, their families and carers.

There are approximately 1 million people from NESB with disability in Australia.

The National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) is most delighted that the Australian Government is revisiting the standards on access to premises for people with disability.

Like all people with disability, the needs of those from NESB are similar in terms of, for example, ramps to get into buildings for people in wheelchairs and clear and conspicuous signage in and around buildings for those with vision impairment.

As such, NEDA endorses the submission of the Australian Federation of Disability Organizations (AFDO) to this review.

However, NEDA takes this opportunity to bring your attention the following issues specific to people from NESB with disability.

1. For people with disability from NESB, the adoption of universal signage is highly significant. In so doing, much frustration and many embarrassing scenes can be avoided. For instance, the presence of universal signage could mean that a person from a NESB who also has communication challenges, can find his/her way to the lavatory without having to try to explain what they require. NEDA strongly recommends that universal symbols be used to direct a person to the different areas of the building such as lifts, reception and toilet facilities.
2. The introduction of an access standard will create a future need for people with disability to be informed about their rights, and to use complaint mechanisms where it is appropriate. NEDA remains concerned that people from NESB, particularly with low English proficiency, have not been effectively empowered in understanding their rights under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. NEDA strongly recommends that the Australian Government explore avenues for improving rights knowledge and empowerment for people from NESB with disability, by making non English resource materials available, and investment in community outreach and development with culturally diverse groups.

I hope that you will favourably consider the recommendations in this letter. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact Zel Iscel, Senior Policy Officer at

Yours sincerely

Dinesh Wadiwel
Executive Officer