

Submission No 47

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BY: MLG AG

**Queensland Parents for People with a Disability Inc.**  
**Parent based systems advocacy**

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PO Box 466  
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26<sup>th</sup> October 2009

Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Migration  
Department of House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
AUSTRALIA

Dear Sir,

Re Inquiry into the immigration treatment of people with disability

Queensland Parents for People with a Disability (QPPD) is a parent based, state-wide, advocacy organisation advocating for people with disabilities, by parents, against abuse and exclusion, for justice and rights.

Our mission is:

*QPPD vigorously defends justice and rights for people with disabilities by exposing exclusionary practices, speaking out against injustices and promoting people with disabilities as respected, valued and participating members of society.*

We are pleased to offer our submission in relation to the above inquiry.

Sincerely



Lisa Bridle  
President

# **QUEENSLAND PARENTS FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY INCORPORATED (QPPD)**

## **Submission**

### **Inquiry into immigration treatment of people with disabilities**

*Contact Persons:*

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Queensland Parents for People with a Disability  
Submission to the *Inquiry into immigration treatment of people with disabilities 2009*

*Funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and  
Indigenous Affairs.*

## **About QPPD**

Queensland Parents for People with a Disability (QPPD) began in 1981 as a parent-based advocacy organisation. It is funded by FAHCSIA under the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP). QPPD membership consists of parents who have a son or daughter with a disability and allies who share our values. QPPD undertakes systemic and family advocacy around issues that adversely affect people with a disability in Queensland.

QPPD welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to this inquiry and thanks those responsible for its initiation. We take this opportunity to acknowledge the significant progress that has occurred recently towards recognising people with disabilities as valued members of our diverse community.

However, while this inquiry presents an opportunity to move further in this direction, the terms of reference present some challenges. They have a clear emphasis on assessing the economic aspect of people with disabilities. QPPD identifies two problems with this approach.

### **1. Focus on costs**

While the cost of support services may be measured in dollar terms, the benefits of including people with (and without) disabilities are not so easily quantified. Such an approach appears to view people with disabilities as merely an economic cost and appears to ignore the contemporary and humane approach of recognising and valuing the diversity of the Australian community, including people with disabilities. Australia has signed the Optional Protocol on the United Nations Rights of Persons with Disabilities and therefore has an obligation to uphold those rights in all aspects of our legal and political systems.

While the focus of QPPD will always be people with a disability, we are also concerned about the impact of the policy on the whole family. When families who have a member with a disability are treated in a less favourable manner than others it has the potential to impact most severely on the person with the disability. QPPD shares the view expressed by most experienced advocates for people with disabilities: that a strong family unit is the most effective support and safeguard for a person with a disability. Any policy that leads to depriving the person with a disability of the support of their family network has the potential to cause them a great deal of harm.

## **2. An assumption of costs to the Australian taxpayer is not always correct**

Some disabilities do require significant funding to provide useful therapy, services and equipment at different stages of the person's life cycle. In Australia, anecdotal evidence from family carers indicates much of this funding and actual care is provided privately by families who support the person with disability. Alternative funding sources are currently under investigation with a proposed National Disability Insurance Scheme to insure against the financial costs of disability with a Medicare-style insurance scheme.

However many people with disability do not require significant funding and are educated, employed, pay tax and are a contributing, valued part of the Australian community – just like people who do not have disabilities. It is not possible to predict with a child – disabled or not – how much they are going to cost and how much they will contribute as an adult to the economic and social life of Australia. In short, it is an old-fashioned and non-research based judgement to assume that disability = economic cost.

In addition, denying immigration to a person with disability effectively denies the same right to the entire family. As well as being discriminatory and inhumane, Australia then loses an entire family of potentially skilled, educated workers who can contribute economically and socially to the country.

QPPD believes that the interests of all Australians, including people with a disability, would be served most effectively by a government with a clear and consistent policy framework that unambiguously defines people with disabilities and their families as valued members of the Australian community.

If the Federal Labor government is genuinely committed to the development of a fair and equitable society and to the support and implementation of the UNCRPD, there is little room for the continued existence of the discriminatory provisions in the Migration Act. We urge the committee to support the recommendation of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties and remove all forms of disability discrimination from the Migration Act.