



Australian Federation of Disability Organisations

247 Flinders Lane
Melbourne VIC 3000
AUSTRALIA

Phone: 03 9662 3324

TTY: 03 9662 3374

Fax: 03 9662 3325

Email: office@afdo.org.au

Web: www.afdo.org.au

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<p style="text-align: center;">Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Australia to ratify Optional Protocol</p>

Mr. Kelvin Thompson MP
Chairperson
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Parliament House
Canberra Australia

Kelvin,

The Australian Federation of Disability Organisations is the National voice of People with Disability formed in 2003 and we represent the interests of all people with disability across Australia. The mission of AFDO is to champion the rights of people with disability in Australia and help them participate fully in Australian life.

We are a cross-disability human rights organisation and comprise of key National diagnostic and State disabled peoples organisations.

- **Deaf Australia Inc.**
- **Australian Mental Health Consumer Network**
- **Blind Citizens Australia**
- **Brain Injury Australia**
- **Deafness Forum of Australia**
- **National Association of People living with HIV/Aids**
- **National Council on Intellectual Disability**
- **National Ethnic Disability Alliance**
- **Physical Disability Australia**
- **Women with Disabilities Australia**
- **Disability Australia**
- **Disability Resources Centre**
- **People with Disabilities (Western Australia)**
- **Access for All Alliance**

At the World Assembly of Disabled Peoples' International in Korea October 2007, the Australian DPI Membership was transferred to AFDO to continue the excellent International work of previous representatives. In June 2008 the AFDO Board appointed new International

Representatives, Dr David Webb and Ms Samantha French who both have extensive disability rights involvement both here in Australia and internationally.

AFDO and our members participated in the development of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities here in Australia and at the United Nations in Bangkok and New York. Our members have been very active in the International Disability Caucus which coordinated the activities of Disabled Peoples Organisations at the Convention Adhoc meetings and between meetings. A key element of the IDC's and AFDO's activities is the full implementation of Human Rights for People with Disability and signing of the Optional Protocol.

During the development of the Convention from 2001-2006 AFDO conducted a series of national consultations for Federal Government to ascertain the views of Australians with Disability. From 2003-2006 our member Disability Australia conducted a series of 28 workshops on the development of the Convention across Rural Victoria and Metro Melbourne. At the beginning of 2008 we again consulted the Australian Disability community for Government regarding the National Interest Analysis for Australia's ratification of the Convention. Further our members have contributed to the recent Hearings of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties.

At all these consultations of the Australian Disability Community participants overwhelming called for International monitoring and appeal provisions to the CRPD Committee to be an integral part of the Convention. Last February at the National Consultations for CRPD Ratifications held in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney and the online submissions were unanimous in their call for Australia to ratify the Optional Protocol. Further in their submissions to JSCOT consultations on ratifying the Convention all our members supported the ratification of the Optional Protocol.

Australian Disabled Peoples Organisations and disability activists have a long history of International work to achieve human rights for people with disabilities. However the Howard years reversed the International human rights work of previous Australian Governments. To overcome this the Australian Government must be seen as transparent and accountable in all it's work, therefore signing this Convention Optional Protocol will show that the Rudd Government is committed to change.

The recent accession of the CEDAW Optional Protocol sets an important precedent for the new Rudd Government to be applied to achieving full human rights for people with disability. In the JSCOT Report of 16 October 2008 on acceding to the CEDAW Optional Protocol the following important reasons are stated;

“Reasons for Australia to take treaty action

- 6.1 Accession to the Optional Protocol would give women in Australia a greater opportunity to contest the implementation and application of human rights. It would also increase**

accountability in promoting gender equality and non-discrimination between men and women.

- 6.2 The Government considered that the Optional Protocol would:
- provide women with an additional mechanism outside Australia’s judicial and political context;
 - demonstrate the Government’s strong commitment to promoting the elimination of discrimination against women and the standards enshrined in CEDAW; and demonstrate the Government’s priority to addressing global challenges such as the protection of human rights.”

The above reasons for acceding to the CEDAW Optional Protocol are even more important for persons with disability. Decades of institutionalised care through the medical and charity models have segregated people with disability from society and hidden abuses from public accountability. Acceding to the CRPD Optional Protocol is an important and necessary step in implementing this Convention.

Finally we support the submissions by the National Association of Community Legal Centres and the UN CRPD Ratification Task Force to the National Interest Analysis and ask you to ratify the Optional Protocol as soon as possible.

If you need any further information please contact our CEO Ms Lesley Hall on 03 9662 3324 lesley@afdo.org.au.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Faithfully,


Frank Hall-Bentick
AFDO Board International Portfolio
fhallbentick@connexus.net.au


Samantha Jenkinson
Deputy Chair
sam@wheelycreek.net