

Dear Committee Members,

I write to you as an Australian concerned about Human Rights for people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs).

I have identical twin boys with Aspergers who are now 14 years.

They have been in a catholic primary, and then a govt school after Grade 3. They are now in Grade 10 and doing appallingly.

Will they be employable? Will they be able to live independently? Will they be happy? Will they commit suicide?

They slip through all the cracks, not retarded enough for special ed - yet not capable of coping and doing mainstream work in highschool either. Their Numeracy and literacy minimum benchmarks are usually under.

They do not possess any compensatory "Rainman" type skills, they are not high-functioning Aspergers -they are merely functioning - rhetoric and promises of no substance is what we get from the school system.

They can be aggressive at home, but are always meek at school. They don't complain, make any trouble for the teacher or present any demands upon their teachers. They just sit their hoping not to get singled out or noticed. Teachers like having them in their class - no doubt because they don't create any problems for them.

It would take a major incident of violence or crime to get them any help. That is a sad reality. It shouldn't have to be like that.

Once they leave school, I don't know if I will ever get them out the house on a daily basis. They much prefer not to interact with society and stay at home.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare cite ASD as the disability most likely to result in severe impairment.

Sadly, outcomes are poor for Australians with ASDs in terms of education, employment, independent living and quality of life. This correlates with Australia's paucity of health and disability services addressing ASDs.

For example the Victorian DHS report *Responding to people with multiple and complex needs* in July 2003 identifies the;

"lack of targeted responses to individuals with autism spectrum disorders, particularly Asperger's Syndrome. These people are often

identified as falling into service gaps, frequently deemed ineligible for both mental health and intellectual disability services."

It is profoundly unjust that the Commonwealth States and Territories Disability Agreements do not to make adequate provision for Australians with ASDs.

If Australia is fair dinkum about a fair go for people with disability, the CSTDA will

- a) formally recognise Autism Spectrum Disorders as a distinct category of disability
- b) compel the States and Territories to provide effective disability services for Australians of all ages with ASDs.

I formally request that the Members of the Senate Community Affairs References Committee take steps to ensure this happens.