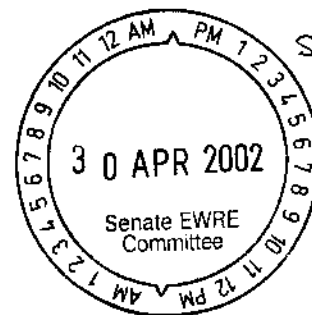


Sub163



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To The Senate Inquiry on Education of Students with Disabilities:

I am a disability student studying a Bachelor of Social Work part time at Melbourne's R.M.I.T. University, city campus. I am in 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the course and have been studying at the University for 3 years.

There have been on-going problems as a disability student with regard to Building 22; and the inadequate provision of lift access for disability students. Because the lift is not the property of R.M.I.T. but that of the Bookshop and is a goods lift, and we are allowed limited access by the bookshop, and at specified times. As an example, this semester I am studying Advocacy and Social Action during April, which consists of a series of 3 consecutive Saturday workshops held in building 22, level 4, room 11. [Usually during the times we are allowed access, we go down a lane behind the building and ring a bell and the bookshop storemen will bring the lift down to you, so you can use it.]

On Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April, when I arrived to attend the first class, I knew the storemen would not be available on the weekend, so I had to struggle up the first flight of stairs to get to the lift push the call button. However, when I arrived at the door leading to the lift, it was locked and there was a sign saying "No access to lift for students".

Luckily I had seen the facilitator for the workshop, Gillian Davey as I came up the stairs so I told her what had happened. She said she had a master key to the building so she could get me in, but as it turned out, it was for all locks except the lift door.

She then spent the next 45 minutes running all over campus trying to get access to the lift. Not even security had a key to it, eventually the bookshop let us in and immediately locked up again as soon as we'd got in. This meant that when I went out at lunchtime I had the same problem trying to gain entry again and the performance had to be repeated.

The problem is not just that I lost time from my class, which should not have happened.

I have the right as a student of R.M.I.T. to be treated the same as every other student. The experience on the that Saturday, and every time I have to rely on other people to do things for me to get me to get in and out of there, makes me feel less of a person.

BY MAKING THE LIFT UNAVAILABLE TO STUDENTS ON THAT SATURDAY, IT WAS A DIRECT CONTRAVENTION OF ARTICLE 23, "ACCESS TO PREMISES", of the Disability Discrimination Act.

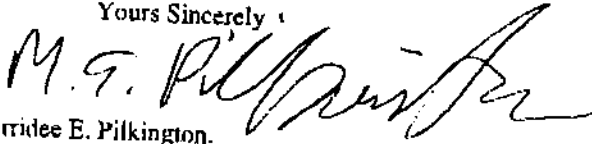
I believe that it is time these issues were addressed by the university and I have made an official complain, following this, through the Disability Liaison Unit of the University. I am also attempting to run a campaign to get the university to change the time frame for replacement of the lift, as unfortunately it is not due to be done until the

whole of building 22 is refurbished. It is well down on their list of priorities – a minimum time frame apparently of 5 years.

In the meantime, disability students lose time from classes, or can't get to them at all. The toilets are not accessible for manual wheelchairs unless you have the assistance of a carer, and not accessible at all too mobile wheelchairs. There are many more things I could mention, but this is long enough as it is.

I hope you can use this submission and Thankyou for reading it.

Yours Sincerely

  
Merridee E. Pilkington.