



**Report to the  
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission  
on the**

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**Workshop on Promoting the Ratification and Implementation of the  
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Australia  
27-28 June 2007**

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**24 July 2007**

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## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1. This is a summary report of the preparation for, conduct and outcomes of a Workshop on Promoting the Ratification and Implementation of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) in Australia held with the support of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission on 27 and 28 June 2007 in Sydney.
- 1.2. The Workshop was attended by representatives of Australia's national disability peak groups, major disability advocacy organisations with a specific interest in the CRPD, the National Disability and Carer Advisory Council, and of each State and Territory Disability Advisory Council. The Australian Human Rights Commissioner, the Australian Capital Territory's Disability and Community Services Commissioner, representatives of the Disability Rights Unit of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, and representatives of the Queensland and Victorian Equal Opportunity Commissions also attended the meeting. A representative of the New Zealand Human Rights Commission observed.
- 1.3. A background paper was circulated to participants before the workshop. The background paper outlines the purpose and objectives of the workshop, as well as providing an overview of the CRPD, and the consultative and deliberative processes to be anticipated in the lead up to the Australian Government's decision on ratification. An amended version of this paper is also now publicly available on the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity website at .
- 1.4. Participants were also contacted before the workshop to ensure that they had received the background paper, to answer any preliminary questions, and to ensure participants were clear about what preparation was expected from them for the workshop.
- 1.5. To encourage full discussion between stakeholder groups, day two of the event was conducted according to the 'Chatham House Rule,' simply meaning that participants were free to discuss their views on the basis that, while participants were free to report on the discussions, views expressed are not to be identified with or attributed to a participant. With the exception of the introductory sessions conducted on day 1 of the event, this report therefore does not attribute views or proposals generated in the course of the Workshop to any particular person or organisation.
- 1.6. The Workshop was facilitated by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre with assistance from RKZ Consulting and the Disability Studies and Research Institute.

## **2. Workshop purpose and objectives**

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- 2.1 The broad purpose of the workshop was to build the capacity of Australian disability peak organisations and disability advisory groups to:
- identify strategies to achieve ratification by the Australian Government of the CRPD, and signature and ratification of its associated Optional Protocol;
  - identify ways in which the disability community can participate effectively in the consultative processes that will lead up to the Australian Government's formal decisions on ratification;
  - identify strategies and resources necessary to promote domestic implementation of the CRPD once the Australian Government ratifies it, and it comes into force.
- 2.2 The workshop consisted of a number of formal presentations and interactive sessions. Minor changes were made to the program on both days in response to circumstances. For example, the Federal Attorney-General was able to give more time to the workshop and so his presentation was extended as was the presentation made by the Attorney-General's Department and the Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

## **3. Opening**

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- 3.1 Commissioner Innes opened the workshop on Day 1, welcoming participants on behalf of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) noting that this was an important and unprecedented event, which gathered together major disability peak and advocacy organisations, Australian disability advisory councils, and key human rights agencies. The meeting might later be viewed as an historic occasion in terms of the movement towards ratification and implementation of the CRPD in Australia.
- 3.2 Commissioner Innes noted that it must be recognised that the CRPD is a negotiated document between countries with different legal systems and social, cultural and religious foundations. It could therefore never be a 'perfect' document from a disability rights perspective. Nevertheless it represented a major advance in disability rights. He urged participants to focus on what the CRPD does provide, rather than what it does not. Commissioner Innes emphasised that the workshop would focus on that CRPD as it is, rather than on what it 'might' or 'should' have been.
- 3.3 Commissioner Innes noted that HREOC is already taking some steps towards the re-orientation of its work towards CRPD rights. The Disability Rights Unit's work-plan has been reframed around CRPD rights. Commissioner Innes encouraged other organisations to consider a similar approach.

- 3.4 Commissioner Innes acknowledged that HREOC has a key role to play in CRPD ratification and implementation processes, particularly as it is likely to be designated one of (but not the only) co-ordination mechanisms envisaged by Article 33 of the CRPD for National Implementation and Monitoring. He noted that HREOC is currently considering and planning its first initiatives in this respect, and input from participants at this event would play a key role in determining and shaping these initiatives.
- 3.5 Commissioner Innes also indicated that HREOC sought to position itself as a bridge between government and the disability sector in relation to CRPD ratification and implementation. This implied a degree of distinctiveness and separation of activity, but strong relationship building on both sides of the bridge to ensure a solid foundation. He particularly commended the strong collaborative relationship that had developed between the Government, HREOC and disability rights organisations in the development of the CRPD, and indicated a desire for this to carry forward in ratification and implementation efforts.

## **4. Information exchange**

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- 4.1 On Day 1 of the workshop, participants had an opportunity to exchange information about current areas of work that are being (or might potentially be) advanced by the terms of the CRPD.
- 4.2 Also on Day 1 of the workshop, non-government organisations that have been working intensively on CRPD development and implementation provided an overview of their current work.
- 4.3 Kevin Cocks of Queensland Advocacy Incorporated provided an overview of a multistage project that involves the development and testing of human rights indicators for persons with disability based on the CRPD. He noted that it is currently envisaged that this will develop into a monitoring tool for CRPD implementation. An Easy-English booklet for persons with cognitive disability outlining CRPD rights has been produced as part of the project.
- 4.4 Therese Sands of People with Disability Australia (PWDA) outlined its contribution to the development of the CRPD, and its intention to develop a strategic approach to pursuing the ratification of the CRPD and its implementation in Australia. A key current focus is promoting commitment to ratification by Australian political parties in the lead up to the federal election that will be held later in 2007. PWDA's systemic advocacy action plan has been redesigned to provide for action and reporting against CRPD rights. CRPD rights and thematic concerns also play a major role in a number of other projects in which PWDA is involved, including the Pacific Disability Forum and the Australian Disability and Development Consortium. Therese also outlined PWDA's experience in the development of non-government 'shadow' reports under existing human rights conventions.

## 5. Statement of the Federal Attorney-General

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- 5.1 The Federal Attorney-General, the Honourable Philip Ruddock, MP, addressed participants on Day 1 of the event. The Attorney noted that in a perfect world the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights* would provide sufficient recognition and protection of the human rights of all persons, including persons with disability. However, that had proved not to be the case, necessitating the development of thematic conventions focused on particular population groups. This now includes persons with disability. The Attorney indicated that he thinks the CRPD is a major step forward in changing traditional negative perceptions of disability. The Attorney noted that the CRPD is the first major human rights instrument of the twenty-first century, and has the potential to benefit some 650 million persons with disability around the world.
- 5.2 The Attorney noted that the CRPD was developed with a high degree of participation by persons with disability and their representative organisations. He noted that a positive collaborative approach had been established between the Government, HREOC and the disability sector during the development of the CRPD, and he hopes that this approach will be maintained into the future with respect to ratification and implementation.
- 5.3 The Attorney indicated that the Government had been pleased to sign the CRPD on the day it opened for signature, and in fact had gone to some lengths to ensure that Cabinet could consider the issue in time for this to occur. He indicated that there is strong in-principle support for the CRPD within the Government, and the act of signature was an indication of an intention to consider in good faith its ratification. However, the ultimate decision on ratification and its timing will depend on the length of time it takes for, and the outcomes of, consultation with the States and Territories, and the community.
- 5.4 The Attorney indicated that there will be extensive consultation with stakeholder groups about the CRPD prior to a final decision on ratification. The Government has not yet determined what form this consultation will take with the disability sector, and indicated an interest in hearing the views of participants on this point.
- 5.5 Consultations with States and Territories will take place according to the usual formally agreed processes. Experience showed that this could take some time to complete. The Attorney noted, however, that there has already been extensive consultation with States and Territories in the development of the Australian Government contribution to the formulation of the CRPD, and that States and Territories had been kept informed of progress through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Standing Committee on Treaties, so there should be no reason for delay in this instance. He indicated that his Department is an 'activist,' 'can-do,' agency and that it is his expectation that the Department will do all that it can to prepare for a government decision on ratification within the shortest possible period. The Attorney indicated that he will personally pursue prompt ratification and will be listing the matter on the

agenda of the forthcoming meeting of the Standing Committee of Australian Attorneys General (SCAG) to give notice of the consultation process in an effort to expedite matters.

- 5.6 The Attorney indicated that it is Australian Government policy not to ratify a treaty until all domestic laws are consistent with the treaty obligations. As such, the consistency of Australian laws (Commonwealth, State and Territory) with CRPD obligations will be a key focus of the pre-ratification consultation and deliberative processes. However, he indicated that at this stage he did not anticipate that this will present significant problems.
- 5.7 The Attorney advised that no decision has yet been made on whether a regulatory impact statement will be required in relation to the CRPD as part of the process leading to a decision on ratification.
- 5.8 The Attorney advised that the Government has decided not to sign the Optional Protocol to the CRPD and will not consider the issue further until there was fundamental reform of the United Nations Treaty Body system to eliminate issues such as the duplication in reporting, inconsistencies in approaches between treaty-bodies, and a large backlog of reports and communications.
- 5.9 Following his presentation, the Attorney-General issued a media statement under the title 'Working Together to Further the Rights of People with Disabilities', which outlines the Australian Government's participation in the development of the CRPD, and the steps it is taking towards ratification. The statement also reflected positively on the continued co-operation and collaboration of the disability sector in this process. This media statement is provided at Appendix 1: Media Release .

## **6. Presentation from Federal Government on ratification processes**

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- 6.1 Officials from the Federal Attorney-General's Department (AGD) and Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FCSIA) addressed participants on Day 1 of the workshop.
- 6.2 In his presentation, Mr Ben Wallace from FCSIA noted the high degree of positive collaboration between the Australian Government and Australian disability groups in the development of the CRPD, and the high degree of participation by persons with disability in the development of the CRPD internationally. Mr Wallace noted the inclusion of a representative of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, and a joint representative of the National Disability Advisory Committee and Australian Federation of Disability Organisations in the Australian delegation to the Ad Hoc Committee was particularly important. He also noted the positive working relationship between the Australian delegation and Australian non-government organisations at Ad Hoc Committee meetings in New York.

- 6.3 Mr Wallace advised that FCSIA and AGD seek to continue this positive collaboration in the processes leading up to the Australian Government's decision on ratification, and ultimately, in implementation of the CRPD. He indicated that the Departments are particularly keen to hear participants' views on the form that pre-ratification consultation with the disability sector should take, and about the resources that might be required by the disability sector in order to effectively participate and promote ratification and implementation of the CRPD.
- 6.4 In his presentation, Mr Peter Arnaudo of AGD echoed Mr Wallace's statements about the collaborative approach that had underpinned the Australian contributions to the formulation of the CRPD. He indicated that the Department also seeks to maintain this collaboration through the pre-ratification consultation process, and ultimately, in relation to implementation of the CRPD.
- 6.5 Mr Arnaudo outlined the steps in the pre-ratification consultation process, focusing on the National Interest Analysis (NIA) process and consideration of the CRPD text and the NIA by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT). Mr Arnaudo indicated that there is a formal process and structure to be observed in the preparation of the NIA, which is limited to six pages.
- 6.6 In terms of next steps, Mr Arnaudo advised that:
- Shortly, an initial letter will be sent by the Federal Government to all state and territory governments advising them of the Commonwealth's intention to commence consultations on ratification of the CRPD. This is essentially about establishing points of first contact with the States and Territories.
  - Later, a second letter will be sent to the state and territory governments to invite those governments' comments on issues to be considered in relation to the potential ratification of the CRPD. The key issue at this stage is identifying legislation that may not comply with the obligations of the CRPD.
  - The Federal Attorney-General will also be making a decision on the form of broader public consultation, and on the form of consultation with the disability sector in particular.
  - As the Attorney had noted, there has not yet been a decision on whether a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) in relation to the CRPD will be required. If an RIS is required, a decision will be required on the form of the RIS, which could be limited or extensive.
  - The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT) may also conduct public hearings as part of its process of considering ratification of the CRPD.

## **7. Presentations on law and processes**

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- 7.1 On both Day 1 and Day 2, there were formal presentations on a number of issues and processes relevant to the ratification and implementation of the CRPD:
- ratification processes;
  - reservations, declarations and understandings;
  - the Optional Protocol and ratification;
  - implementation of the CRPD.
- 7.2 These built on the content of the background paper and provided an opportunity to begin the discussions about what should be the focus of any campaign by the disability sector for ratification.

## **8. Towards a campaign for ratification of the CRPD**

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- 8.1 On Day 2 of the workshop, in a series of interactive sessions, participants discussed the development of a campaign to promote ratification by the Australian Government of the CRPD.
- 8.2 Participants first considered issues preliminary to the development of a campaign for the ratification of the CRPD. This included a SWOT analysis of the current environment.
- 8.3 Key strengths and opportunities in the environment that were noted include:
- Early signature of the CRPD by the Australian Government.
  - An apparently favourable attitude towards ratification by the Federal Attorney-General and the Australian Government.
  - An apparent willingness of the Federal Attorney-General to actively pursue ratification within the Federal Government and with states and territory governments.
  - A positive working relationship between the disability sector and the Australian Government in the development of the CRPD, which provides a strong basis for collaboration on ratification and implementation.
  - A history of consultation with Commonwealth agencies, States and Territories and other stakeholder groups, in the development of the Australian Government contributions to the formulation of the CRPD. (These groups have therefore had long-term notice of the CRPD and the opportunity to influence its development; no major issues have emerged to date).

- By world standards, Australia has relatively advanced rights protections and social supports for persons with disability, and exceeds the minimum requirement of the CRPD in many areas.
- There is unlikely to be any substantial conflict between current Australian legislation and the obligations of the CRPD.
- A clearly defined consultation and deliberative process leading up to the Australian Government's decision on ratification, which provides a number of opportunities for the disability sector to put its views.

#### 8.4 Key weaknesses and threats in the environment that were noted include:

- The Australian Government's opposition to signature and ratification of the Optional Protocol in the absence of significant advances in its Treaty Body Reform agenda.
- Potential closer scrutiny of the CRPD text by Commonwealth agencies, state and territory governments, and some stakeholder groups, now that ratification is being actively considered.
- Potential delay by state and territory governments in responding to Australian Government's consultations about ratification.
- Potential for resistance to the CRPD from some quarters of the community opposed to international policy and oversight mechanisms;
- The potential for some stakeholder groups, including state and territory governments that are principally responsible for the provision and regulation of disability services, to identify barriers to ratification arising from the current level of achievement of economic, social and cultural rights.
- The risk that a failure to highlight discrepancies between CRPD rights and the lived experience of persons with disability in Australia may result in Australia forming the view that it has nothing to do to implement the CRPD domestically.
- Potential for inconsistent messages and priorities on Australian compliance with CRPD to emerge from the disability sector.

## 9. Key Campaign Messages

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- 9.1 Participants then developed key messages that might underpin a campaign for ratification that would seek to maximise these strengths and opportunities. These initial benefits statements were then considered and prioritised and were further developed through a process of synthesis. The synthesised messages are:

- The CRPD recognises the dignity and human rights of persons with disability, and such recognition is necessary and long overdue; it completes the human rights jigsaw in respect of persons with disability;
- State and territory governments have been extensively consulted and informed by the Australian Government at each stage in the development of the Australian Government's position on the CRPD. Their views have been taken into account in detail in the negotiation process.
- The CRPD is now finalised. It is time to accept the outcome of the treaty negotiation. Failure to accept this outcome would embarrass Australia, which took a positive leadership role in the international negotiations.
- The CRPD does not establish any new human rights; it applies existing human rights to the circumstances of persons with disability. The major source documents and treaties for the CRPD, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, were accepted or ratified by Australia more than 20 years ago.
- The CRPD assists in clarifying and explaining existing rights and obligations in relation to persons with disability.
- Australian laws already comply with the CRPD, and in key respects go beyond the minimum standards required by the CRPD.
- While there may remain much to be achieved to fully realise the human rights of persons with disability in the Australian context, the CRPD clearly recognises change is to be pursued through progressive realisation of the obligations set out in its Articles. The fact that improvements are needed, however, presents no barrier to ratification.
- The CRPD was developed with a high level of positive collaboration between persons with disability and the Australian Government. There are high expectations among Australians with disability that Australia will move quickly to ratify the CRPD and maintain its international reputation as an active supporter of the CRPD.
- Because of the recognition that change is to be pursued by progressive realisation of the Articles the ratification process should focus primarily on Australia's capacity to show its laws are consistent with the CRPD. The timetable for ratification therefore need not be prolonged.

9.2 Participants agreed that these messages should be used consistently in all communications and discussions with all stakeholders.

## 10. Campaign Target

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10.1 Participants then considered the targets of a campaign for ratification. Through a series of negotiated and interactive sessions the following targets were agreed by consensus:

- Ratification of the CRPD by the Australian Government by or on 3 December 2008: the annual date of observance of International Day of Persons with Disability
- Signature and ratification of the Optional Protocol of the CRPD at some point in the future. However, signature ratification of the Optional Protocol is not to be linked to ratification of the CRPD.
- Continuing commitment from all levels of government to involving the disability sector in Australia's timely development of the monitoring and implementation mechanisms required under Article 33 of the Convention.

10.2 Participants also considered the issue of whether or not positive declarations should be sought in respect of the interpretation of the CRPD. It was agreed that this outcome should be part of the campaign goals. In particular, it was agreed that declarations would be sought in relation to:

- interpretation of the reasonable accommodation definition to set the standard as consistent with the higher (Australian) standard of unjustifiable hardship;
- interpretation of article 17;
- article 21;
- article 29(b);
- article 30(5)(a);
- 'disability': this term is not currently defined in the CRPD, and Australia uses a broader definition than many other jurisdictions;

The need to ensure a broad interpretation of terms within the CRPD was also discussed, for example, interpretation of the term 'deaf' in article 24 to include people who are hearing impaired. It was agreed that consideration should be given further to this in the development of the campaign focus and also to other aspects that could be subject to a positive declaration.

10.3 HREOC agreed to do further preparatory work on the potential for positive declarations and understandings.

## 11. Campaign co-ordination mechanisms

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11.1 Participants discussed the need for co-ordination mechanisms for a campaign for ratification that take account of the different profiles and capacities of organisations participating in the workshop. The following were agreed by consensus:

- That the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) be approached to auspice a co-ordination unit/task force drawn from interested disability peak and advocacy organisations to work towards CRPD ratification. That AFDO involve People with Disability Australia and Queensland Advocacy Inc in this work. A suggested model is the national consultation process undertaken during the CRPD development process.
- That AFDO utilise the knowledge and commitment of the workshop participants and their organisations, and invite other relevant individuals and organisations to join that Network.
- That the secretariat of the Network of Australian Disability Advisory Councils be approached to auspice an equivalent unit/task force drawn from the National and State and Territory Disability Advisory Councils.
- That the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission will not participate directly in the disability sector campaign for ratification, but will provide support and co-ordination consistent with its statutory role, and seek to provide a bridge between the Australian Government and the disability sector.
- That there be close liaison between AFDO and the secretariat of the Network of Australian Disability Advisory Councils in co-ordinating the ratification campaign.

11.2 The consultants also suggest that consideration be given to including the National Association of Community Legal Centres in the campaign team/taskforce to ensure ongoing access to expertise on international human rights law mechanisms and monitoring.

## 12. Campaign Strategies

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12.1 In the limited time available, participants began to formulate key strategies to be pursued in a campaign for ratification. Those strategies proposed were:

- Making representations to the Australian government to ensure that the consultation process to be undertaken prior to ratification is limited to the essential issues necessary for a decision on ratification, rather than implementation more generally. These questions might be framed as:
  - Should Australia ratify the CRPD?

- Do any Australian laws need to change to comply with the CRPD prior to ratification?
- Identifying Parliamentarians from each political party willing to champion ratification of the CRPD and Optional Protocol.
- Enlisting the support of state and territory human rights agencies for the campaign, particularly in relation to state and territory government consideration of proposed ratification.
- Seeking the support of allies among the broader human rights and social justice communities, including for example, from the Australian Council for Social Service, the state and territory councils for social service, community legal centres, Amnesty International, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, etc.
- Make representations to state and territory Attorneys General in an effort to persuade them to engage quickly in the pre-ratification consultation process, and not raise objections to ratification.
- As far as possible promote leadership on ratification from state and territory Attorney General's Departments rather than disability service agencies in view of the formers' cross government role in the review of legislation.
- Build awareness and support within the disability sector for ratification and implementation of the CRPD; encourage the disability sector to adopt the campaign messages outlined above; encourage the disability sector not to unnecessarily agitate regarding the substantive realisation of CRPD rights prior to ratification.

## **13. Resources required**

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13.1 Participants also considered the resources that would assist in securing ratification and ultimate implementation of the CRPD. The following were suggested:

- The funding of a co-ordination mechanism/task force to facilitate disability sector input into the pre-ratification consultation process.
- The development of information products in accessible formats explaining the CRPD for persons with disability. In particular, information products accessible to persons with cognitive disability ought to be developed.
- The development and delivery of education and training for persons with disability in relation to the CRPD.
- The development of a 'visual' and descriptive map of the pre-ratification process to inform stakeholder groups.

- The development of information and education products for other stakeholder groups about the CRPD, including government officials, and the general public.
- Training workshops for Commonwealth, state and territory officials who will advise state and territory Ministers about the ratification process. This will ensure that they properly understand the task at hand and are in a position to respond promptly and relevantly in the preparation of State and Territory responses.

## **14. Conclusion**

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- 14.1 Commissioner Innes concluded discussions on Day 2 by thanking participants for their contribution to the meeting. He suggested that the workshop had been a very valuable event in informing and positioning the disability sector to participate in pre-ratification consultative processes. He reminded participants of his opening statement to the effect that this will become an historic event in terms of the movement towards implementation of the CRPD in Australia.
- 14.2 Commissioner Innes advised that HREOC will consider the suggestions for resources in planning its next initiatives in the area, and will discuss these suggestions with the AGD and FCSIA with a view to considering how they might be progressed. He indicated that HREOC will keep participants informed of any developments in relation to these issues.
- 14.3 Commissioner Innes advised that in the short-term HREOC will prepare and circulate to participants a summary report on the workshop. HREOC will also arrange for the editing of the background paper so that this can be posted to the HREOC website to make it accessible to a broader audience.
- 14.4 At the end of the event participants formulated and published a communiqué that called on all Australian Governments to work towards ratification of the CRPD on 3 December 2008. A copy of this communiqué is attached at Appendix 2: Workshop Communiqué.
- 14.5 All participants were asked to complete an evaluation of the workshop.
- 14.6 Participants were also asked to indicate the willingness of their organisation to remain involved in the campaign as well as to identify a contact person for the Federal Government's consultative process.

## **Appendix 1: Media Release ‘Working Together to Further the Rights of People with Disabilities’**

**Australian Government Attorney-General’s Department**

Media Release 122/2007

27 June 2007

### **WORKING TOGETHER TO FURTHER THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

The Australian Government today reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring the rights of people with disabilities are protected.

In a speech to non-government organisations and disability advisory groups, Attorney-General Philip Ruddock spoke about the steps the Government is taking towards potential ratification of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

“The Government is committed to safeguarding the important rights of people with disabilities,” Mr Ruddock told a workshop on the UN Convention, at the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in Sydney.

“The Convention is an important step towards changing traditional perceptions of disability and ensuring that people with disability are able to live their lives to their fullest potential.”

“It is the first international treaty to focus specifically on the rights of people with a disability and will help protect the rights of 650million people with disability worldwide.”

The Government will now commence a review of Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation to ensure domestic law is consistent with the obligations of the Convention.

An analysis of possible impacts, including the results of extensive community consultation, will also be completed and table in Parliament, together with the Convention.

Australia actively participated in the development of the Convention and was among the first to sign it when it was opened for signature on 30 March 2007.

“Australia’s active participation in the development of the Convention and our signing of the Convention is an indication that we will in good faith consider ratification,” Mr Ruddock said.

I would like to thank the disability sector for their continued cooperation and collaboration”

2 July 2007

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### **Human rights and disability representatives call for speedy ratification of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability**

A coalition of Australia's peak human rights and disability advisory and advocacy groups called on the State and Territory governments to support the Commonwealth as it pursues swift ratification of the new United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. The participants representing national organisations and organisations from all states and territories met for two days last week in Sydney at a workshop on the UN Convention auspiced by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

This Convention is the first major UN human rights treaty of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and those attending the meeting were quick to congratulate the Federal Government on being among the first to sign the Convention on 30 March 2007. The next step is to ratify the Convention; a process that involves the State, Territory and Commonwealth governments.

Speaking for those who attended, Kevin Cocks of Queensland Advocacy said today:

The UN Convention sets out fundamental rights for full societal participation for people with a disability, enshrining their rights in modern and effective law. So far, 99 countries have signed the Convention but only one country has ratified. We urge all Australian governments to work as quickly as possible to enable Australia to take full advantage of the benefits of the Convention at the earliest opportunity. Our goal is for Australian ratification of the Convention by 3 December 2008, International Day of People with a Disability.

Australia has shown leadership in the Convention development process, working closely with disability groups to advocate for meaningful rights for people with disabilities. People with disabilities look forward to working further with the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to continue this leadership and be one of the first 20 countries to ratify, the number needed for the Convention to come into force.

Disability advocacy and advisory groups are also keen to work with all levels of government in Australia to develop the monitoring and implementation mechanisms required under Article 33 of the Convention.

Also speaking for those who attended, Andrew Buchanan of the Disability Council of NSW today said:

Human rights and disability advisory and advocacy groups applaud the Federal Government's progress so far. We now urge all Australian governments to do the work to ensure that people with a disability in Australia are guaranteed the rights articulated in the new UN *Convention on the Rights of People with a Disability*.

More information on the UN Convention can be found at:

[www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable)

**This statement has been authorised by representatives of the following organisations:**

ACT Disability Advisory Council  
ACT Disability and Community Services Commissioner  
Australian Association of the Deaf  
Australian Federation of Disability Organisations  
Blind Citizens Australia  
Brain Injury Australia  
Deafness Forum  
Disability Council of NSW  
Disability Council of Queensland  
Disability Studies and Research Institute  
Intellectual Disability Rights Service  
Mental Health Council of Australia  
National Association of Community Legal Centres  
National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS  
National Council on Intellectual Disability  
National Disability and Carers Ministerial Advisory Council  
National Ethnic Disability Alliance  
National Seniors Australia  
NSW Disability Discrimination Legal Centre  
People living with HIV/AIDS NSW  
People with Disability Australia  
Premier's Disability Advisory Council (Tasmania)  
Public Interest Advocacy Centre  
Physical Disability Council of Australia  
Queensland Advocacy Incorporated  
Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission  
WA Ministerial Advisory Council on Disability  
Women with Disabilities Australia

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