



**Blind Citizens Australia Submission to the Joint
Standing Committee on Treaties Investigation into
Accession to the Optional Protocol of the UN
Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities**

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Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) is the peak national advocacy organisation of and for people who are blind or vision impaired. Our mission is to achieve equity and equality by our empowerment, by promoting positive community attitudes, and by striving for high quality and accessible services which meet our needs. As the national advocacy peak body we have over 3000 individual members, branches nationwide and 13 affiliate organisations that represent the interests of blind or vision impaired Australians.

BCA is extremely pleased that the Australian government wishes to move towards accession to the Optional Protocol (“the Protocol”) on the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UN CRPD). We believe that accession will be a positive step towards creating a society which not only applies the letter of the law when it comes to human rights for people with disabilities, but which expects that these rights will be automatically met where-ever possible. For Australia, accession will bring us in line with our practice in terms of other international treaties and is a step towards taking a leadership role in working towards human rights for people with disabilities in the Asia Pacific region and across the world.

In particular, BCA feels that accession to the Optional Protocol would allow all Australian jurisdictions a chance to look at their remedies for systemic disability discrimination issues. While this is an ongoing process, we believe that the eventual introduction of the Optional Protocol will serve as a focal point and provide further incentive for reflection.

BCA especially commends the government’s commitment to upholding Article 8 of the Optional Protocol and ensuring that

the Treaty Committee is given full recognition by Australia. To further ensure that accession to the Optional Protocol promotes good human rights outcomes for Australians with disabilities, BCA encourages the government to undertake an effective education campaign which will give people with disabilities, their families and carers, an understanding of all of the human rights mechanisms available to them at a State, national and international level.