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The Hon. Susan Ryan, AO, Age and Disability Discrimination Commissioner

Australian Human Rights Commission  
Level 3, 175 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000  
  
By email**:** [ageanddisabilityinquiry@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:ageanddisabilityinquiry@humanrights.gov.au)

**Re**: **Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability**

Background

CBM Australia is a Christian international development NGO. Our vision is ‘An inclusive world in which all people with disability enjoy their human rights and achieve their full potential.’ CBMA continues to be a global leader in disability inclusive development, addressing poverty alleviation through the inclusion of people with disability and working together with other NGOs, governments and international agencies towards greater disability inclusion. In Australia and overseas, we campaign to change attitudes towards disability.

The terms of reference for this Inquiry require that

* “in conducting its Inquiry, the Commission should base its findings on research, including that into the prevalence and impact of [...] disability discrimination, and the extent to which discrimination contributes to people being unemployed or underemployed”... and ...
* “As part of its report the Commission may wish to identify best practice examples of recruitment, retention, and of reasonable adjustment in the workplace for [...] Australians with disability”.

CBM Research Report:

CBM Australia would like to make available a research report, titled *Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) Research Project: An analysis of ANCP partner organisations’ engagement on disability inclusion and recommendations for future progress*. Copies are attached to this submission in both PDF and Word formats. The report is available publicly online.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Research for this report was carried out during 2013-2014 with ten Australian based NGOs working in international development on disability inclusion across their operations: CARE, Caritas, CBM, ChildFund, Fred Hollows Foundation, Oxfam, Save the Children, TEAR and World Vision.

We believe that this report is relevant to the Commission’s request for research and evidence in relation to disability discrimination (and inclusion), in helping to identify barriers and enablers to disability inclusion, as well as practical tools and approaches that have helped organisations to ‘audit’ themselves for disability inclusion including reasonable adjustments, and recommendations to improve disability inclusion in organisations.

Key findings and summarised recommendations are set out at pages 32-36 of the report. Case studies are also appended to the report.

Using organisational change theory the report finds that positive change toward disability inclusion is increased where:

* organisations are dissatisfied with the *status quo* e.g. about a lack of inclusion, or recognise the need to consolidate gains and make further progress across the breadth of their organisation;
* they have a vision for what is possible such as improved disability inclusion, ‘walking the talk’ of their values and mission statement, aspirations to leadership and best practice; and
* staff receive support to build their awareness and confidence and take first steps, including appropriate training and professional development, resourcing and supports.

The report also found that change needs to be embedded into an organisation’s work by proactive work to incorporate, promote and reward disability inclusion across all levels of the organisation’s operations:

1. the organisation itself – its governance, policy, systems, processes and programming;

2. at the individual staff level – enhancing skills, responsibilities and accountabilities of staff; and

3. its external partnerships – influencing, partnering and capacity building of its partners.

These findings could be promoted across business groups and within Australian employers’ networks.

This exploratory research used focus group discussions to collect information on the perceptions of staff about the process of change toward greater disability inclusion in their respective organisations. The Report then analyses themes around enablers and barriers to inclusion. Each organisation developed case studies on their experiences of inclusion - these are appended to the report. One of the case studies provides an example of good practice for including staff with disabilities. It outlines how CBM Australia is practising recruitment and supports, including how it incorporates inclusion into budgeting etc. even as a not-for-profit organisation.

We believe having more case studies across a range of work sectors could also encourage more organisations to take the initiative to employ more people with disability.

It is a common argument that organisations ‘can’t afford’ to provide reasonable adjustments to people with disability. We believe that our research inquiry shows that businesses do not have to be ‘for profit’ or make a lot of money to be inclusive and to make reasonable adjustments, but rather have the will to change, and to put values of inclusion into practice. This is good business. All employers need to recognise that inclusion of people with disabilities enriches diversity and leads to a range of viewpoints, which can contribute to fresh ideas and innovation which in turn can increase the quality of work and productivity.

Since the inquiry, several of the participating organisations have reported to us that they have proactively recruited people with disabilities, and many have developed policies and action plans to increase their practice of disability inclusion, including their recruitment.

CBM researchers in this project also designed a tool to assist organisations to review inclusion across their corporate and programming functions and provided it to the them for piloting. This tool continues to be trialled, with feedback to assist continuous refinement by CBM Australia. Requests to use the tool have now been received from the broader Australian not-for-profit sector (e.g. Breast Cancer Australia). This tool may assist organisations identify potentially discriminatory practices, but also – more importantly - take steps to develop more positive disability inclusion best practice.

The report, completed together with assistance from the Australian Government’s Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) was released on   
3 December 2014 to coincide with International Day of People with Disabilities. Feedback has indicated that the process - of focus group discussions and the development of the case studies - itself triggered or renewed a disability inclusion focus for many NGOs.

CBM is pleased to have made this contribution to the sector and hopes that it will be a useful resource to promote better disability inclusion in the future.

We trust that the report is useful to the Commission in its inquiry, and look forward to the Commission’s findings in this important area of social policy.

Yours sincerely,

**Janelle Richards**  
Director, People and Culture

CBM Australia

Attachments:   
CBM (2014) Australian NGO Cooperation Program Research Project Report (Word, PDF)

1. <http://www.cbm.org.au/documents/News%20Items/CBMA%20Australian%20NGO%20Cooperation%20Program%20(ANCP)%20Research%20Project%20Report%20F....pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)