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

# Submission No 192

**Name** Jason Stehn

To whom it may concern,

I am Jason Stehn, I have been diagnosed with autism, schizophrenia and obsessive compulsive disorder. I currently receive a Disability Support Pension from Centrelink as my main source of income. As far as working – because of the barriers that result from my disability (which I describe in this letter) – applying for jobs has become impractical. Because of my barriers, I have come to a point wondering whether I should be seeking for employment or whether to just stay comfortable on Disability Support Pension. I also see a Disability Employment Services – which I am currently part way through a 12 month break from them.

As a result of my disabilities I do suffer from light sensitivity- meaning that I have a number of things that cause extreme discomfort to me. Some of these are LED, halogen, compact fluorescent lamps and some linear fluorescents. I do not find polarised sunglasses helpful in reducing the sensory overload. But I will express this matter clearly – that if a place has the right lighting requirements (for me this is use standard incandescent light bulbs or use linear fluorescents no greater than 4000K in colour temperature) – I do not need features like polarised sunglasses.

I am currently studying a Diploma of Library and Information Services and would like to work within a school library in the future. Also, I volunteer at a local school library to where I live. After having about 6 years experience in school libraries (mostly volunteering experience with some casual employment) within three different school libraries I do see barriers that occur as a result of my disability. As a result of barriers I wonder whether I should even bother looking for permanent work when barriers exist.

Barriers occur to me within gaining employment from three areas:

1. Transportation to get to and from work
2. Barriers that exist within the school
3. Four government legislations/rules created barriers – two federal government legislations and two legislation are Queensland Government.

Transportation to get to a school library is a big issue for me. As I personally do not drive and would need to depend either on public transport or get driven by parents. The barriers that I experience with public transport are the following:

Trains:

Queensland Rail’s Citytrain network have an almost completely lot of trains that cause me sensory overload. There is only one train model that is only used on selected Sunshine Coast line services that are good for me (that is the InterCity Express units). All the other trains have the following features:

1. Audible push button doors (only the InterCity Express and a small number of Electrical Multiple Units currently do not have this feature).
2. Loud automated voice system (on all except the InterCity Express services)
3. Passenger Information Screens that are bright and distracting (on all except the InterCity Express services).

As a result of trains having these features – I do not take any trains that are not suitable for me. Also, I have written my problems with the Australian Human Rights Commission against Queensland Rail in 2014. This found that Queensland Rail was not breaking the law but those features are requited as a result of the Disability Standards For Accessible Public Transport 2002.

I am aware that there are plans to modernise the Disability Standards For Accessible Public Transport 2002. Apparently this is expected to be completed by June 30, 2016 according to the final report of the 2012 review of the Disability Standards For Accessible Public Transport 2002.

Buses:

Some bus companies are good for me to travel on such as Caboolture Bus Lines as well as Sunbus Sunshine Coast. However some buses have some problems because of LED lighting used on buses such as three buses from Kangaroo Bus Lines and a significant amount of buses on Hornibrook Bus Lines and Brisbane Transport. Just like trains – I do not take buses that have LED on board instead of linear fluorescent.

I am eligible to receive Mobility Allowance as I have significant problems with taking public transport. But the amount of Mobility Allowance and the hours of potential work that would be required from the schools do not add up in my favour. I calculated just the taxi access to local area schools and I would be significantly disadvantaged if I was to do let’s say 4 or 5 days work and have to use taxi.

I have noticed in the different school libraries that I have seen, I have barriers that are not being broken down. In my school experience I have suffered with:

1. Linear fluorescent lighting with a colour temperature greater than 4000K.
2. Compact fluorescent lighting

As I have stated earlier in this letter I need linear fluorescent lighting under 4000K or use standard incandescent lighting.

The third barrier is government legislation and the following legislations/rules are barriers for me.

1. Disability Standards For Accessible Public Transport 2002 (which I discussed earlier)
2. The phase out of standard incandescent light bulbs
3. Queensland State Schools need to source lighting from companies with an Australian Business Number
4. Queensland State Schools must use energy efficient lighting

Rules 2 to 4 just above are closely related.

The phase out of standard incandescent lighting was done by the Federal Government, announced in 2007 by Malcolm Turnbill and phasing them out started in 2009 with GLS and now fancy round and candle bulbs above 25W are phased out. By my understanding the Australian Federal Government still wants to phase out more.

Queensland schools for years have had the rule to only deal with companies with an Australian Business Number. Since Australia has sales restrictions on standard incandescent light bulbs, you cannot order future standard incandescent light bulbs from a company with an Australian Business Number. Schools do get audited to ensure that they are following the rules and I believe schools would be punished if they do not comply auditors standards.

From this consultation I would like to see barriers that I experience in general be broken down so that I would have greater opportunities just like everyone else – especially since government policies increase my barriers.

Yours sincerely,