



Statement

SENATOR JAN MCLUCAS Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers

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Sorry I couldn't be with you on this wonderful occasion to celebrate your 30th anniversary year conference, but I thank you for giving me the chance to provide this message to you.

For people who have vision impairment, or physical, perceptual or intellectual disabilities that impact their ability to view print information, navigating the complex territory of this information age can prove extremely difficult.

All too often, the formats in which information is released and distributed to the public, across all aspects of society, do not accommodate people with disability. All too often, this reality puts these Australians at a disadvantage, leaving them feeling isolated and socially excluded.

Since its inception in 1981, the Round Table has been fighting for better and broader access to information. Access that doesn't discriminate.

By drawing together organisations involved in the production, distribution and use of alternative format materials – from Braille, to audio, large print and electronic text – the Round Table has been at the forefront of breaking down the barriers for people with print disability.

This 30th anniversary year is a great opportunity to look back over the progress of the last three decades and to explore the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead in our fast-paced and information-rich environment.

Like you, the Australian Government recognises that affecting positive change for people with print disability means staying on top of the issues that affect them. Engaging with the sector to find out how best to respond to their needs.

We are working hard to remove discrimination and to help create a more socially inclusive society for people with disability. And we are proud of the inroads we are making to achieve this vision.

In March this year I was delighted to officially launch the Australian Government's National Disability Strategy.

The Strategy outlines a 10-year national plan to improve the lives of people with disability, promote participation, and create a more inclusive society.

It will guide public policy across governments and aims to bring about wholesale change in all mainstream services and programs as well as community infrastructure.

We have invested \$11 million to support a number of new initiatives under the Strategy, two of which specifically target people with print disability.

Through our Print Disability Services Program, we have provided \$1.4 million (in 2010-11), to five organisations to convert a broad range of print material into digital masters which can be readily converted into alternative formats to meet the needs of people with print disability.

Furthermore, we will improve access to print material in a digital format in selected public libraries across the country with \$1 million (2010-11) under our Library Initiative. This program will fund a range of playback devices, such as Daisy players and audio navigators, for use by people with print disability across the nation's public libraries.

And these are just some of the initiatives underway to help end discrimination and social exclusion.

These kinds of reforms are crucial to ensuring people with disability have access to all the same opportunities as other Australians – a quality education, adequate health care, a job where possible, and access to information, buildings, transport and social activities.

I want to congratulate you on the great work you have done to advance the rights of people with print disability, and I wish you well as you embark on this 30th anniversary conference.

Thank you.
