



THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS
FROM THE PRESIDENT

6th February 2004

Legal and Constitutional Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

via email: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

RE: Disability Discrimination Amendment Bill 2003

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners is concerned that this Amendment would allow employers, providers of education, landlords, health professionals, etc to discriminate against people who use illicit drugs, unless those people are receiving 'treatment'. The nature of the treatment is not well-defined in the proposed Amendment.

The Government's proposed changes are likely to be counter productive in that they will perpetuate and magnify factors that are known to exacerbate problematic drug misuse. There is the further concern that the loss of the Disability Discrimination Act protections for drug addicted persons may promote unsafe injecting practices and increase the risk of acquiring blood-borne viruses such as HIV and Hepatitis C.

Furthermore, the proposed amendments may act as a barrier to some individuals accessing treatments for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS. We are also concerned that the Amendment does not seem to have been informed by medical, scientific, or health experts, and that even the terms 'addiction' and 'treatment' are not adequately defined.

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners supports universal access to high quality medical care by all persons in Australia and is opposed to discrimination of any groups and the potential negative impact of discrimination on the health of people at risk.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michael Kidd'.

Professor Michael Kidd
President