

Email received Friday, 10 July 2015
From Mr William Jolley

**Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on treaties
in response to the National Interest Analysis on the Marrakesh Treaty**

Submission to:

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
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Submitted by:

William Jolley
A person who is blind

Friday 10 July 2015

To whom it may concern

I welcome this opportunity to make a submission, in relation to the National Interest Analysis, to the JSCT's inquiry into the *Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for People who are Blind, visually Impaired or otherwise Print Disabled (Marrakesh, 27 June 2013)* ("the Treaty").

I strongly encourage the Australian government to ratify the Treaty because this will facilitate the international exchange of books and reduce wasteful duplication such as the Harry Potter novels being locally produced in braille and audio in each of the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia.

I was born totally blind just over 60 years ago, and I received an excellent school education in Melbourne. The bedrock of my literacy is braille, and I obtained a degree with honours in mathematical statistics. I used braille exclusively, relying heavily on the lecture notes with almost no access to text and reference books because they were too complex to put into braille or to be read on to tape. However, many of these books (or equivalent references) were available from the United States.

For ten years I worked as a mathematician in the telecommunications industry, but my inability to access printed documents using mathematical notation proved to be an insurmountable obstacle.

Like many Australians, I love to read. When I read fiction, I enjoy escaping into worlds far removed from my own. I love having my imagination opened up and being

introduced to people and places that expand my world view. It relaxes me. It feeds my soul, and it helps reduce the stress of everyday life.

When I read non-fiction, I feel empowered by learning new things. The development of my analytical and critical thinking skills and the knowledge that I am increasing my vocabulary and understanding of the world are merely a terrific bonus!

In some fields of study audio books are very complex and therefore expensive to produce. My particular interest is modern physics and cosmology, a proper understanding of which needs knowledge of the underlying mathematical theory and analytic techniques. Many of the superior text and reference books are available to citizens of the United States, read by skilled narrators who can articulate the equations correctly and describe the diagrams clearly. But I am not an American citizen, so I cannot listen to these audio books—even though access would be achieved by simply obtaining a username and password for entry into a digital repository. None of these texts are available as narrated audio books in Australia.

The complementarity of international copyright laws so that books can be shared across borders will expand my leisure and study reading horizons. I understand that the World Blind Union has reported that less than 5% of the information published in print is made available in accessible formats such as audio or braille. This tiny proportion is most disappointing.

It has been a constant frustration to me that much of my time, even today, is spent scanning documents, or converting digital documents into accessible formats so that I can read the same documents as my sighted peers.

I support the positions taken by Blind Citizens Australia and Vision Australia in their submissions to the JSC on Treaties; And, once again, I strongly urge the Australian Government to ratify the Treaty.

Yours faithfully

William Jolley