

Submission by [REDACTED] (a friend of a Thalidomide survivor) for:

- ***Financial support and redress by the Australian Government to the victims of Thalidomide use.***
- ***To assure that such financial support reaches Parity with the compensation given to thalidomide victims of other countries.***
- ***Public Acknowledgement by the Australian Government of hardship both financial and emotional caused upon the families and survivors of Thalidomide use.***

Terms of Reference of Senate Enquiry:

- a) Adequacy of compensation and support
- b) Responsibility for providing support
- c) Provision of financial compensation
- d) The role of the Australian Government in compensation and support
- e) Any related matters

I am the friend of a Thalidomide survivor; I know of the struggles that my friend lives with 24/7. I know of the pain it has caused her family, and that continues to this day. My friend is in constant physical pain, is ridiculed by strangers, ignored by people, pointed at, whispered about... why ... why?.. Well our Australian government let in, and gave / sold tablets to young healthy women to help with morning sickness. Knowing that this drug was causing severe birth defects, our Government never stopped the sale of these drugs. The Doctors were still allowed to prescribe the tablets, the Pharmacists were allowed to dispense and sell without prescriptions this drug.

My friend's body is deformed, not through any mishap that occurred at conception or birth or accident ... but through a tablet that our Australian Government approved – Thalidomide! This deformity cannot be fixed, undone, rectified or swept under the carpet; it cannot be hidden, or ignored.

It's a very confronting disability, it's very noticeable, the physical aspects are very noticeable, and the unseen internal disabilities are just as shocking. Heart defects, nerve ending damage. The list is endless of the damage this drug has done to its many victims.

My friend has had many operations, and will be facing many more over the coming years.

The Government cannot treat this as a regular disability, it's not regular. These survivors need extra help, they need understanding, they need their needs met.

My friend is independent as she can be – she is an amazing woman with what she can do, but she is very limited by what she can't do.

I have been out to lunch with her- I have seen the waitress put her full glass of drink in the centre of the table. I have seen and heard, the look the whispers ... I have an idea – a small assumption- of what she goes through daily. I know how much her husband does for her, I know how much we her friends do for her, I know how much she does for herself, I know how much she has to rest, I know she is in pain, constant never ending pain.

I have heard many stories of how her life was as a child, and I know how it is now as an adult... A life that could have, - should have been so much different. If only the Australian Government never let this drug into our country

My friend needs assistance with every aspect of day to day living. Thalidomide has robbed my friend of so much. She is reliant on somebody at all times.

The Australian Government – failed in their duty of care – to the healthy young expecting women – they failed in their duty of care – to the babies that were left with these lifelong painful deformities. They were all robbed of their future possibilities, future plans, and freedom.

The guilt that these women have carried with them from the time they took that pill to their last breath. The hopes, the dreams, the futures that they had planned were all ruined by Thalidomide.

Governments from around the world support and help Thalidomide survivors – unlike the Australian Government who think the NDIS has the magic wand. These innocent victims need our Government to stand up and acknowledge this problem, and fix their mistake. Thalidomide survivors are survivors – but in all reality they are nothing more than victims of a Government disaster.

It is much more than missing limbs, and internal damage – its everyday life that is broken – that has been taken from these people.

Simple tasks like: opening a locked door, and turning on a tap, switching the lights on or off, – turning on the lamp. Opening a can or pouring a drink. Making a sandwich for lunch. Doing / undoing buttons or zips. Generally getting dressed and undressed. Just buying clothes is a huge drama. Alterations need to be done on all clothes. Washing their hair, drying themselves after a shower. Putting on a dab of perfume or a spray of deodorant .... Scratching that itchy spot, or picking off that bit of food stuck on their tooth. Blowing their nose. Using cash at the shops, carrying a wallet / phone /glasses / handbag. There is not a part of any day or night that Thalidomide has not taken away from them. The list is endless- every aspect of every day and night....with every movement, need or want, some kind of help is required 24 hours a day 7 days a week 365 days a year, ...

Who should be responsible for the ongoing support? The drug company Grunenthal, and the Australian Government. They certainly played their part in the Thalidomide disaster in Australia. Look back through newspapers; The Hansards of the day prove that they certainly didn't do anything to stop this disaster of babies with mutilated bodies being born and certainly not forgetting all of those who did not survive. There is evidence that after the Australian Government approved and allowed Thalidomide to come into our country, and after the warnings went out about what thalidomide did to babies in the womb, the Health Minister of the day Senator Wade (Liberal) eventually banned the drug but he did not stop the sale of the Thalidomide pills that were already here in Australia. Because of his 'lack of any action' regarding the drug Thalidomide in Australia, it was still possible to walk into a Chemist shop and purchase these tablets over the counter without a script, 7.5 months after 'the manufacturer had withdrawn it from the market'. Now is the time that the Australian Government stepped up and does the right thing.

My friend was born a Thalidomide Victim – she became Thalidomide Survivor – her name is [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]