

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

**Program:** Australian Human Rights Commission

**Question No. SBE16/031**

**Senator Siewert asked the following question at the hearing on 18 October 2016:**

Senator SIEWERT: Mr McEwin, I wanted to ask you about issues of representation for people with moderate or, in particular, severe intellectual disability in various decision-making bodies. Have you given consideration to how that should occur and be improved?

Mr McEwin: Do you mean across federal and state jurisdictions?

Senator SIEWERT: Yes.

Mr McEwin: I have not considered it deeply, but, as part of being newly appointed to this role, I am consulting with many stakeholders, including civil society, and the issue has been raised with me, so I am taking that into consideration. For now I would say I am happy to take it on notice, but I have not actually had a chance to consider it deeply.

Senator SIEWERT: That would be appreciated. It is an issue that is coming up more and more.

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

Article 24 of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* affirms the right of people with disability to participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others. It is important that all people with disability, including those with moderate or severe intellectual disability are represented in decision-making bodies and are provided with opportunities to express their views, concerns and opinions.

Since his appointment, the Disability Discrimination Commissioner has met with a wide range of people with disability and their representative organisations and listened to their concerns and ideas about how to ensure the rights of people with disability are better protected in Australia. The Commissioner has also been conducting national consultations on his proposed priority areas for his term: employment, education, housing, the criminal justice system and the implementation of the NDIS.

In the consultations conducted to date, many stakeholders have noted the importance of a strong, independent, professional and adequately resourced advocacy sector. They have noted that this will assist in building the capacity of people with disability to participate in all aspects of political and public life. The Commissioner will continue to engage with a wide range of people with disability and their representative organisations about these issues.

The Commissioner's national consultations will continue until March 2017. A final report summarising the findings will be released at the end of the consultation period and will be available at <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights>.