

22nd April 2003

Victoria

Commissioner Helen Owens
Productivity Commission
LB2
Collins Street East
Melbourne

Honourable Commissioner,

INQUIRY into DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

I write directly to you to outline a nine(9) year problem that I have experienced as an injured person from a motor vehicle accident(MVA) as a pedestrian in Fitzroy, Melbourne on the 23rd of May 1994. If you wish to utilise the following in your above INQUIRY, please do so.

Whilst waiting for a transport lift to a sub-contract job in far northern Victoria in the early hours of Monday morning the 23/5/1994, I sheltered out of a cold and very heavy downpour of rain at the entrance of an underground car park adjacent to a Fitzroy supermarket designated as my place of pick-up. An unknown vehicle driven by an Asian woman on her way to work did not see me and drove over my crossed lower legs that on impact had gone into full muscle contraction at the weight of the small sedan she drove. I immediately grabbed the passing passenger door underbody of the car and attempted to lift it off of my legs that by this time was slightly dragging me sideways in its path of travel. The driver seen me and stopped immediately and an ambulance was called for that soon arrived and transferred me to the nearby St Vincents hospital. After the usual four hours of observation in the casualty ward of the hospital, my legs were heavily bandaged-up and I was assisted on underarm crutches out of the hospital and into a waiting taxi. Unfortunately. at this time I still could not coherently converse or talk from the accident trauma and...

scribbled on the taxi drivers note-pad the word Alexandra. I had quite a considerable amount of cash money in my possession that I displayed to the driver and he handed me his mobile telephone. I called my aged mother at Alexandra somehow informing her that I had to go to the Alexandra hospital and she arranged to meet me at a nearby town of Molesworth in her car, of which she did and drove me to the Alexandra hospital where I was admitted overnight for further observation. Back at the St Vincents hospital they had arranged an appointment in a hospital clinic for me on that coming friday morning.

On the next day, tuesday, I was discharged from the Alexandra hospital into my mothers care and spent all day motionless in her guest room where I realised that I had to be examined by a "real" doctor. On the Wednesday I informed her that I had to go back to Melbourne to see a doctor that I had much confidence in and she placed me on the Melbourne bus where I travelled to inner Melbourne and visited a past friend Dr.Goldberg (now deceased). He immediately admitted me to St Vincents hospital for treatment of massive deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolus. Whilst at the St Vincents hospital for approximately two weeks, I was asked to sign a Victorian Transport Accident Commission form of some sort to inform them that I had been run-over by a car.

2. Following release from St Vincents hospital, my mother privately rented a cottage house in Alexandra near her place and for the following two years was bed-ridden. Unable to freely walk as a direct result of injuries received in the MVA. During this time, the local solicitor arranged for his son-in-law at a prominent Melbourne legal firm to assist me with the legalities of the MVA. Four years after the MVA and following examination by three well known Melbourne medical practitioners I was coerced into releasing the TAC from any legal action and given a \$10,000 settlement cheque by the Melbourne solicitor. I still could not freely walk and was reliant on a wheelchair and underarm crutches for mobility at all times of which I still am.
3. I was up until this time receiving a "newstart" allowance of approximately \$130 per week from the then federal department of social security and had lapsed into considerable rent arrears at my private accommodation...-/3.

4. My mother had heard locally about a public housing scheme that provided five by eight meter self-contained units in rear yards by the government with the long-term arrangement of rental to purchase and she applied for a wheelchair accessible unit for her rear yard. Unfortunately, the unit was constructed but was not wheelchair accessible in any way. Ownership of the unit was in the hands of the government Moveable Unit Branch that required a period of six months to pass control of the unit over to the local Seymour office of public housing. During this period, my mother/carer and myself outlaid approximately \$2400 to access the unit and had what was thought of as an agreement with the local housing officer to recompense this money after his local office received authority to rent the unit to me. By this time, I was denied requests to rent to purchase the unit from the then state minister of public housing and was not recompensed any monies outlaid to access the unit.

5. The local state member of parliament informed me of an advocacy service in operation in nearby Shepparton called the Council for the Disabled who informed me that I had the right as a disabled person to complain about both the legal firms coercion to release the TAC who should have looked after my accommodation as an injured person from a MVA and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission who would investigate my disability accommodation needs. Written complaints were forwarded to the Victorian Legal Profession Tribunal and the Equal Opportunity Commission. The Equal Opportunity Commission passed my complaint onto the Australian Human Rights Commission who passed me on to the Australian federal court who passed me on to the federal magistrate court who dismissed my complaint as being vexatious to its court and it was suggested that I lodge a dispute resolution application with the Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal who recently dismissed my application for disability accommodation assistance from the local office of public housing although ordered that the office insulate the rented unit at the rear of the above address in Alexandra.

6. On the 30/4/2003, a conference of conciliation at the Melbourne rooms of the Legal Profession Tribunal is scheduled to take place in a bid to resolve why the Melbourne legal firm did not claim any or all entitlements due to me under the Transport Act.

...-/4

7. The approximate costs to all parties involved with the above either claimed, payed or outstanding is as follows: -

Melbourne legal firm	\$2,000	payed
Director of Public Housing	\$30,000	(?)
R.J.Soreng	\$5,000	unpayed
various disability services	?	unpayed
	approx. <u>Total \$40,000</u>	plus

8. Since the MVA, I am personally in debt just over \$40,000 of which I do not know how I am going to repay this amount. It is unknown what amount the TAC insurance is.
9. To date of this correspondence, the local office of housing has conducted certain works to enable wheelchair access at the above rented unit but are still in denial of rent-to-purchase and I am still unable to income sufficient funds to purchase land to build a suitable home on and obtain a suitable income from as was what I was attempting to achieve before the MVA.

There is many details left-out of this nine(9) year struggle for assistance although you are quite welcome to request any further information that you may think could be helpful in your inquiry.

Respectfully,

Ronald John SORENG
Disabled Pensioner