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Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Submission on potential future amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Act

In my role as National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) hosted by Charles Darwin University, I believe I have the knowledge to offer comment on Questions 9, 17, 18 and 19.

RIGHTS FOR CARER ASSISTANCE ANIMALS

Question 9

Should the Act be broadened to include specifically trained assistance animals such as therapeutic and psychiatric seizure alert animals?

NDCO comment: There appears to be a trend towards the inclusion of assistance animals on campus. The Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research (Spring 2015), Vol. 5, No. 1: 15-34 documents this trend, in the article 'Emotional Support Animals, Service Animals, and Pets on Campus C':

Although "traditional" service animals, such as guide dogs to aid persons with physical disabilities, have been accommodated on campuses, the use of animals to assist individuals with psychiatric issues is a more recent trend (Huss, 2012). Within the past several years, colleges with no-pet policies have begun receiving more and more requests from students who claim the need for a "companion" or "emotional support animal" (ESA) as an accommodation for their mental, psychiatric, or emotional disorder T VON BERGEN / DOI: 10.5929/2015.5.1.3 Page 16 (Degutis, 2014). Many postsecondary educational institutions

are confused about their obligation, if any, to waive their pet bans under these circumstances.

In a recent webinar (<https://www.adcet.edu.au/resource/9705/adcet-webinar-40th-ahead-annual-conference-summary/>) hosted by the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training, Cathy Easte summarised information she heard during the 40th Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida in July 2018. She noted that one of the major topics discussed was the use of a variety of assistance animals that were coming onto university campuses.

Given the trend in increasing numbers of assistance animals, aside from guide dogs, The Act should be broadened to include specifically trained assistance animals such as therapeutic and psychiatric seizure alert animals.

FAILURE TO ACCOMMODATE A SPECIAL NEED

Question 17

Should Section 24 be amended to clarify that it imposes a positive obligation?

NDCO Comment: Section 24 should be amended to clarify that it imposes a positive obligation; this would be in line with community expectation.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION COMMISSIONER AMENDMENTS

Re-naming of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner

Question 18

Is the name "Equal Opportunity Commissioner" preferred to the name "Anti-Discrimination Commissioner?" Would the benefits of a new name outweigh the financial cost that comes with re-naming an office?

NDCO Comment: The title change to "Equal Opportunity Commissioner" is a proactive way to describe more accurately the scope of work currently undertaken by the ADC. It would encourage public awareness of functions beyond those relating to complaints; and communicates a broader role in promoting practices that foster equality of opportunity and inclusion.

Extending term of Anti-Discrimination Commissioner's appointment

Question 19

Is increasing the term of appointment of the ACD to five years appropriate? Should the term of appointment be for another period, if so what?

NDCO Comment: It would be appropriate for the ADC to be increased to five years to be in-line with the majority of the Commissioners appointed under other anti-discrimination legislation and other independent statutory offices in the NT.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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