

# Dyslexia Australia

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## **Is Dyslexia a Disability or a Learning Style to be Acknowledged and Preserved.**

The sufferings of the little girl, Mary Ellen, led to the founding of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the first organization of its kind, in 1874, through the efforts of Henry Bergh.

Mr. Bergh was the founder of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Protection for Mary Ellen was sought through a society to protect animals.

This is a sobering thought. A child had to be considered less than human before action was taken.

One hundred and twenty-five years later not much has changed. At a Federal level, consideration is being given to classify our dyslexic children as "disabled". Our beautiful dyslexic children have to be considered less than whole before they can be protected.

Prior to entering school a dyslexic has no disabilities. Dyslexics are disabled by the failure of the education system to change and meet their needs. The dyslexics' emotional well being is disabled or damaged by their experience within the current system.

Until the focus has been changed, the learning style of dyslexics acknowledged and changes made to teaching styles, our dyslexic children will continue to be disabled.

Our aim should not be to further damage our dyslexic children by publicly labeling them "disabled" and thereby perpetuating the loss of self-esteem, feelings of failure and loss of hope for a positive learning experience and future career. A dyslexic has a unique learning style which deserves to be acknowledged, funded, and equal opportunities made available to access higher education.

Unfortunately, too many adults have been disabled by the system. The negative effects of their learning experience has been too great to overcome. Their potential destroyed, their self esteem in tatters and a sense of failure ever present and undermining their ability to be successful or happy. For these numerous people I would never presume I can label or define their experience into one word. All I can say is that I have a level of understanding as to the pain that is felt by those adults disadvantaged by the reading (or math, dyscalculia) problem of dyslexia and I support them in seeking appropriate representation and funding.

I consider myself to be a dyslexic in recovery. For 8 years I have been healing my wounds, smoothing the scars and building my self-esteem. I consider myself a survivor not a victim. To treat me otherwise would be deeply wounding.

I understand some of the reasons to get dyslexia recognized as a disability. One reason is to access funding from an established source. Another reason is to address discrimination for job seekers and employees in the work place.



Additionally, there are many dyslexics that are silently discriminated against. They experience blocks to their acceptance into higher education, promotion in employment and in some cases sponsorship to live in our great country.

**To the State Government of Queensland, Minister of Education and fellow citizens:**

*Article 24 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in education states that the rights of persons with disabilities to an education must be realised without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity.*

Queensland Education states:

*A few common conditions that don't meet the criteria for targeted funding for students with disability include:*

- *learning disabilities (e.g. dyslexia)*
- *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).*

<http://education.qld.gov.au/student-services/learning-disability/parent-guide/adjustments/not-eap.html>

Since Education Queensland specifically states that dyslexia is not a funded disability then should a Joint Initiative be considered?

Federal and State Governments engage in “Joint Initiatives” to protect, engage change, and encourage improvements in social, environmental, and economic areas in order to drive society towards positive results.

The cost alone to the economy ,of not having Dyslexia recognized, by gainfully employing those with dyslexia, and the taxes that those people generate, would more than make up for the costs of not having someone contributing to the economy.

Sadly, in the young offender and prison population over 50% are dyslexic.

One of the most successfully programs we have world wide is Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). AA is successful because it was developed by an alcoholic, for alcoholics and it is facilitated by alcoholics. A successful and effective Joint Initiative for dyslexia that, like AA, draws on the experience, values and knowledge of dyslexics can be achieved.

As proven with Mary Ellen, sometimes we need to create change to get results. Maybe, like Mary Ellen, we need to regress in order to move forward. Perhaps we need to regress to the label of disability to get recognition and funding.

In my dreams I would like to visualise that we are capable, through a Government Joint Initiative, of simply moving forward.