

**22 April, 2010**

**WAPF releases Antonio Buti essay on disabilities policy**

Antonio Buti, [Professor, Law Faculty, The University of Western Australia, Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Western Australia and the High Court of Australia ] has written a thought-provoking and challenging piece for WAPF on disabilities policy. Discrimination on the basis of disability is just as serious a political concern, he explains, as the more ‘traditional’ or visible classifications like race or religion or gender. Yet, he believes, in an affluent, tolerant society such as Western Australia, it is surely intolerable that any man, woman, or child should go through life segregated and deprived of their rights for any reason, including a physical or intellectual disability..

Buti argues that the equality of rights created in a just and prosperous society with the moral will to attend to individual rights and the economic ability to do so should put an end to our tendency to perceive ‘flaws’ in the individual, and move our attention to the deficiencies in social and economic mechanisms that do not accommodate differences. It mandates a change in attitude in the larger social fabric - of which we are all a part - to ensure that people with disabilities are no longer viewed as problems, but as holders of rights that deserve to be met with the same urgency we afford to those without disabilities..

Buti suggests that to achieve these goals the whole of Government policy, the approach to legislation and the attitudes of society must change, and that State Government policy flowing from such an equality of rights would look radically different from today. “True equality for the disabled is much more than access to buildings and methods of transportation, important as these are. It also involves subjecting every piece of legislation, every facility, and every decision-making process to a review from the standpoint of the rights of the disabled – a disability audit if you will.” This alone would have a major impact on policy.