

Thank you chair and thanks for the opportunity to make this brief statement this morning. On behalf of the First Peoples Disability Network Australia I would also like to acknowledge the recent progress both EMRIP and the Permanent Forum have made in recognizing the human rights of Indigenous people with disabilities.

I represent Australia's first people with disabilities. By any measure Australia's First Peoples with disabilities are amongst some of the most disadvantaged of all Australians, they often face multiple barriers to their meaningful participation within their own communities and the wider community. At least 45% of all Australia's first peoples have some form of disability or long term health condition, 9.1% of Australia's first peoples have a severe or profound disability. Disability amongst First Australians occurs at a rate of more than twice that than the rest of the Australian population. Yet the vast majority of Australia's first peoples with disability remain at the periphery of the disability service system and other aspects of social support. They continue to be very seriously over represented in Australian prisons, and very high numbers of our young people with disability have been removed and continue to be removed from their families by government authorities. We say meeting the needs of Australia's first peoples with disability is one of the most critical social justice issues in Australia today. We know that we share this story of high rates of disability with our brothers and sisters from other post colonial countries in particular with our friends from New Zealand and Canada.

We are concerned that the experience of Indigenous peoples with disabilities from post colonial countries is not well understood. Colonization is a direct cause of disability. From the arrival of the colonizer in Australia new diseases appeared and many of Australia's first people's acquired disability through violent conflict. Furthermore the traumatic impact of colonization was and remains a leading cause of disability amongst Australia's first peoples, manifesting in high rates of psychosocial disability. Indeed we say that it would be exceptional for an Indigenous Australian not to have experienced depression and anxiety at some point in their life. Colonization has also caused posttraumatic stress disorder amongst many First Australians, manifesting often in a trans generational form of trauma.

So despite living in an otherwise wealthy nation, the health and social outcomes for first Australians with disabilities are comparable to those who live in developing nations. We understand these experiences to be similar for our Indigenous friends from Canada and New Zealand.

Therefore we call on members states to EMRIP adhere to their obligations to secure the rights of Indigenous people with disability, from: inclusive participation of Indigenous people with disability in *all* aspects of domestic policy which affect us; Equitable access to supported disability programs; Ensuring that Indigenous children with disability remain safe and secure with their family, community and culture; Providing a system of education for our children which is both inclusive of culture and disability; and a fair and just model of disability justice which aims to support disability rather than criminalize it.

I thank you.