



SUBMISSION TO THE CONSULTATION PROCESS ON NEW HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY BODY

NOVEMBER 23 2011

INTRODUCTION

Older & Bolder welcomes the invitation to make a submission to the Working Group on the establishment of the new, enhanced Human Rights and Equality Commission. As an alliance of eight NGOs in the age sector, Older & Bolder champions the rights of older people. The member organisations of the alliance are Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity, Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Carers Association, Irish Hospice Foundation, Irish Senior Citizens Parliament, Older Women's Network and the Senior Help Line.

Given the tight time-frame for submissions, Older & Bolder's remarks are restricted to a number of key points. We would be pleased to expand on and further develop our remarks in future correspondence or interaction with the Working Group.

FUNCTIONS

The view of the alliance is that the existing functions of both the Equality Authority and the Human Rights Commission should, at a minimum, be retained in any new body.

Both equality and human rights paradigms should be fully reflected, with neither one swamping the other, in the new body. Each paradigm advances the age equality and rights agenda in a positive, distinctive but complementary manner and this support from a national body, appropriately resourced and mandated, must be maintained.

In some instances, existing functions should be extended. Specifically the equality grounds should be extended to include socio-economic status. State bodies should be required to act and behave in compliance with human rights and equality standards and the new body should have the powers to require responsiveness and adherence to those standards from State bodies. The new body should be mandated to provide human rights and equality training to public and civil servants; and to actively engage with civil society organisations in the fulfilment of relevant functions.

INDEPENDENCE

The independence of the new body is crucial. The Board of the new body should be independently appointed through a transparent and publicly accountable process. The new body should have its own budget and premises. The budget should be commensurate with the mission and functions of the new body and enable it to work effectively. The CEO and senior management team should be independently appointed by the Board. Reports on the new body's work should be presented to An Oireachtas.

UN CONVENTION ON AGEING

The option of developing an international Convention of Ageing is now being actively pursued by the United Nations. Older & Bolder supports the development of a new UN Convention on Ageing and would welcome independent and expert support from the new body in promoting internationally, the development of a new UN instrument which would be of direct benefit to older people in Ireland.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Enquiries about this submission may be directed to Ms. Patricia Conboy, Director, Older & Bolder, tel.01-8783623, patricia.conboy@olderandbolder.ie