

**From:** [Olivia Wellesley-Cole](#)  
**To:** [ADAreview](#)  
**Subject:** ADA Review; submission; Hair Discrimination faced by African Australians and other groups  
**Date:** Friday, 22 August 2025 2:35:50 PM

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Dear Colleagues,

I first wish to express my apologies for sending this submission in after the closing date of 15<sup>th</sup> August; I have only just been made aware of the review process.

I have read the Consultation Paper #24 (May 2025) this morning, and wish to raise an issues that I think falls under racism and is about hair discrimination faced by African Australians (and other similar groups), predominantly girls and women in schools and workplaces.

Specifically, I want to address an issue falling under the following questions:

**Question 3.5: Indirect discrimination based on a characteristic**

Should the prohibition on indirect discrimination extend to characteristics that people with protected attributes either generally have or are assumed to have?

**Question 4.6: Racial discrimination**

(1)

(2) Are any new attributes required to address potential gaps in the ADA's protections against racial discrimination?

**Question 5.2: Potential new attributes**

(1) Should any protected attributes be added to the prohibition on discrimination in the ADA? If so, which what should be added and why?

**Question 5.3: An open-ended list**

Should the list of attributes in the ADA be open-ended to allow other attributes to be protected? Why or why not?

**Discrimination on basis of Natural African Hair**

"African" hair is typically black with small, spiral-shaped curls or coils, giving it a dense appearance compared to other hair types. It tends to stand up from the head as opposed to growing down the sides back of the head and neck eg in the typical "Afro" style.

Cultural ways of looking after such hair is to have it natural, as described above, or braided in a range styles, including cornrow (braided in row along the head) or in multiple individual plaits. Other ways of looking after the hair is by straightening it, removing the natural spiral curls. This can be done using heat or chemicals.

However, reports are being raised within the African Australian communities that female school

students and professional women are being advised to ensure that their appearances include hairstyles that look Eurocentric – ie straight or wavy (as opposed to curly) hair; this is not a natural look but can be achieved with wigs or hairpieces.

I recently received an email which said:

*"We [Africans] are the only migrant group in Australia where our girls are expected to manipulate or change their God-given hair just to attend school or enter the workplace."*

Someone else said:

*"I have come across several African parents with this issue and they had to take it up with the school to explain the nature of African hair and how it is maintained."*

And

*"It is an issue many African ladies have had to deal with in various industries."*

On following up with other contacts, it seems that there is a lot of concern within our communities about this issue, but it has not been reported to decision-making bodies such as yours. Hence this submission.

Apart from the impact on girls and women in being subtly or not subtly being informed that they do not belong with their natural hair, there is the impact on the family budget, with costs of wigs and hair pieces becoming part of the weekly shopping basket, a burden on the breadwinners both male and female.

Organisations that can be contacted for further information include African Australian Advocacy Centre, AAAC, <https://www.africanaustralianadvocacy.org.au/> Enable Women Africa, EWA <https://enablewomenafrica.com/>

Thank you for your consideration of this submission.

Regards

Olivia Wellesley-Cole

*If not us, who? And if not now, when?*