The National Safe Schools Framework aligned with the Australian Curriculum work towards creating safe, supportive and respectful teaching environments (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2003, p4). It is its vision that all members of the community should value diversity, respect and inclusion (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2003). The framework also concedes that a student’s safety and wellbeing are enhanced when they feel connected to their school, create positive relationships and feel confident about their learning experiences (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2003; King, 2010). As a school in Australia, you are expected to have these policies already in place for students and families. Through your rejection you are not only denying the progress that the framework stands for, but you are denying Adisa’s opportunities at these types of experiences. Within its nine principles, “Early Intervention and Targeted Support”, is one that truly resonates with this issue (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2003, p4). Principle 8 focuses on effective processes for early identification of students who could benefit from additional support (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2003). The Safe Schools Hub toolkit also addresses the importance of ethical and intercultural understanding (Department of Education and Training, 2014). It provides empathy and acceptance of diversity as well as creating a strong understanding of values such as honesty and justice (Department of Education and Training, 2014). Adisa’s rejection is an injustice to not only her, but to the growth in culture and diversity of your school.

I understand that your school prides itself on many values similar to the teachings of Values in Australian Education. Of the nine principles that are set out to reflect commitment to a multicultural environment, where students are entitled to justice, I strongly believe three of those principles are not being met (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005). ‘Fair Go’, ‘Respect’, and ‘Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion’ are all essential principles that you, as an education provider, are required to posses and encourage (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005, p4). It is now recognised that people with a disability want to be regarded as people first, and to make decisions that affect their own lives (Foreman & Kelly, 2014). Not only should you also acknowledge this, but if you were to allow Adisa admission you would be giving her a fair go by treating her justly, respecting her decision to attend school in a least restrictive environment and being socially aware of including diversity within your school (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005; Foreman & Kelly, 2014). By the simple rejection of a student, shows me that you are rejecting the principles that make up the foundation of education in Australia.

There is a “significant disparity that continues to exist between educational attainments for children with disability compared to children without disability” (Australian Human Rights Commision, 2011, p26). Coinciding with this issue are statistics released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2011 that suggest “very little progress had been made over the past 6 years in relation to increasing the number of children with disability who complete year 12” (Australian Human Rights Commision, 2011, p26). Schools and organisations are adhering to Article 3 in the UN’s Rights of a Child by working towards what is best for children and bridging these gaps in education (United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund, 2008; Australian Human Rights Commision, 2011). By denying my daughter entry this suggests that you are doing quite the contrary. As a child, Adisa has many rights entitling her to a just and supportive education. Among them Article 23 “children who have any kind of disability should receive special care and support” and article 29 “education should develop each child’s personality and talents to the full” (United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund, 2008) work hand-in-hand in proving to you that without allowing Adisa her rights to attend your school, you are not only putting her at risk of not being able to reach her full potential but you are discriminating against a child based on her intellectual disability or racial background.

Without changes in social attitude focusing on the rights of not only my child but also every child battling a disability across Australia, “little progress would be made in addressing any acts of discrimination,” (Foreman & Kelly, 2014, p52). In 1992, the Australian Government passed the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) that states that it is “unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a student on the grounds of a persons disability” (Foreman & Kelly, 2014, p52). The act seeks to eliminate discrimination against people like Adisa with disabilities to ensure that they have the same rights to equality in education as the rest of the community (Disability Standards for Education 2005). By refusing to accept Adisa’s application for admission, you are directly discriminating against her for an attribute that is seen as ‘unfavourable’ in your environment (Equal Opportunity Act, 2010, p19). The Convention on the Rights of the Child is devoted to ensuring that “children are to enjoy all the rights of the CRC without discrimination of any kind” (Australian Human Rights Commision). Whether you are discriminating against my child for her race, intellectual ability or disability, I urge you to reconsider whether your school truly adopts this notion (Australian Human Rights Commission).