

Text of Speech on Worlds AIDS Day broadcast by
ABC, "AIDS Sharing the Challenge"

AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

AIDS TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Text of a World AIDS Day Television Broadcast

AIDS - SHARING THE CHALLENGE

The Hon Justice Michael Kirby AC CMG*

WORLD AIDS DAY

The first of December is designated by the World Health Organisation as World AIDS Day. The purpose of setting aside one day like this is:

- * To encourage people in all lands on the six continents to reflect upon the serious challenge to public health caused by this wholly unexpected epidemic;
- * To provide an occasion for us to reflect upon the needs of the people living with AIDS - their families, loved ones and those caring for them;
- * To reflect upon the urgent needs of science and technology to find a cure for, and a vaccine against, the human immuno deficiency virus which triggers AIDS - so that one day this epidemic will be just a footnote to human history; and
- * To promote the educational messages - especially to the young - so that they learn of the ways in which this virus is spread of the need for self-protection that

will roll back the epidemic and prevent more people from being infected.

Earlier in the year, in a grey building in Geneva, I attended a meeting of the Global Commission on AIDS. Sitting around the table were the scientists who are in the forefront of the struggle against AIDS - Montagnier and Gallo who first isolated the virus. Nobel Laureates and others dedicated to this fight. We learned of the initiatives being taken to share the global challenge. That is the theme which has been chosen by WHO for World AIDS Day in 1991 - Sharing the Challenge.

SHARING THE CHALLENGE

The question we all have to ask ourselves is: what are we doing to share the challenge of AIDS?

It is not as if there were not many things for us to do. One of the Commissioners at the table at that meeting in Geneva was Noreen Kaleeba, Director of the AIDS Support Organisation in Kampala, Uganda. Now AIDS threatens the people of that unhappy country who have only just been rescued from the horrors of Idi Amin. Today they face a challenge of a new and terrible kind. Into the villages and shanty towns of Uganda, they are sending story-tellers who spread the message about AIDS and the urgent needs for prevention. We should help them.

Closer to home, in Australia, there is also much to be done:

We must extend our support to the homosexual and bisexual men who acquired AIDS in the early days of the

epidemic when they were in the frontline;

- * We must show compassion to the people who acquired AIDS from drug addiction and the use of unsterile needles;
- * We must throw no stones at the sex workers infected with HIV; and
- * We must extend compassion and support to those who acquired the virus by blood transfusion.

Every one of these people is our brother or sister.

So now we all face a test. It is a test of our attitude to these people, to whom we should unreservedly extend our assistance. This is the AIDS test that must be taken by all of us. It is the AIDS test in which we must all come up positive.

- * Trustee of the AIDS Trust of Australia. Commissioner of the World Health Organisation Global Commission on AIDS. President of the Australian Section of the International Commission of Jurists. Personal views.