

Unfoldings-Foreword

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UNFOLDINGS

FOREWORD

The Hon Justice Michael D Kirby AC CMG *

I defy you to read this book and to come away without a sense of humility, sorrow and anger.

Humility in the presence of the thoughts of so many fine people. People who have walked with dear friends on the hard journey of HIV/AIDS. Their messages of love, devotion, humour in the face of suffering, whimsy and steadfast dedication command attention. These are the private thoughts of people unknown to us. They have shared the loss of lovers, children, friends, and patients. They have done so with golden words and with golden cloths. It is a precious sharing.

Sorrow cannot be avoided in stories of death and suffering. You can laugh, if you like, at the ordinariness of human lives and the foibles of human love. But all of the people whose stories are told in this book, in words and in the QUILT, have mourned. They have done so in private. They have also done so in a public way, in words and in cloth. They help us too to mourn and, in part at least, to understand.

Anger comes from a reflection on so much suffering. Lives prematurely lost. Discrimination and denigration heaped on pain. The cruelty of some people to others, even in the face of death. Anger at the withdrawal of funds from health support. Anger at the slow progress being made in science. Anger at the spread to helpless millions in profoundly poor countries - beyond Australia and New Zealand where, at least, there has been some enlightenment. And anger about all the pain.

And then amongst all the anger you will see the panels of the QUILT. And read how they brought joy, feelings of closeness, self-therapy and satisfaction to the makers. And how they make sure that the names of the dead are not forgotten. Society can see those people not as statistics anymore - but as loving, breathing people with the bric-a-brac and memorabilia that every individual picks up just by being human. These are the banners of human spirits.

So this is a book of human stories. I hope that it will carry its messages far and wide. In that way we may mobilise our sorrow and our anger. And turn our emotions to education, to science, to help.

Patron of The Quilt Project. Formerly Commissioner of the World Health Organisation Global Commission on AIDS and Trustee of the AIDS Trust of Australia.