

Foreword

Annual Report 1993-4 Australian Down Syndrome Association Inc.

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AUSTRALIAN DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION INC

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FOREWORD

**The Hon Justice Michael Kirby AC CMG
Patron**

I am privileged once again to write a Foreword to the *Annual Report* of the Association.

I am truly astonished at the amount of work which is done and the achievements secured by a small team of dedicated workers. They contribute not only to the betterment of the lives of people with Down Syndrome. They also make notable contributions to the improvement of Australian society by challenging stereotypes. Boy, do I dislike stereotypes! Every human being, with precious and individual gifts, is entitled to be judged on his or her merits and seen as an individual. By struggling against stereotyping of those living with Down Syndrome (and their families and friends) we are fighting against similar mental blinkers when it comes to other minorities in Australian society. Let our motto for 1995 be "Down with stereotypes!".

There are so many initiatives of the Association and its members that it is hard to know where to start with praise:

- For the parents of adult Down Syndrome children who visit, for advice and support, the parents of newborn infants who are wondering how they will cope;
- For the organisers of the National Teleconference Programme;
- For the promoters of the speech therapy camps;
- For the teachers who assist in mainstreaming of children in aspects of the education system;
- For the researchers studying in the field of intellectual disability;

- For the efforts to help colleagues and friends overseas, particularly in the Philippines;
- For the private enterprise and television corporations which have offered practical support, employment and assistance to Down Syndrome workers;
- For the lobbyists who badger governments to improve the lot of those working and living in this field; or
- For the editors who produce the Association's *Newsletter* with its catchy title *Down Syndrome Down-Under*.

An important achievement of the year was the launch of the film *Eddy the Unbelievable* during National Down Syndrome Week. It shows the extra dimension of a child, with intellectual ability, but with a rare understanding of the creatures and things in his environment. It is finding that extra dimension in every human being, including those living with Down Syndrome, that should be our quest. Talk of international human rights is empty unless we recognise that it extends to every human, regardless of race, colour, creed or other indelible attribute: including intellectual capacity.

Members of our Association should see their mission in the wider context. They should be evangelists for judging all people, everywhere, on their own individual merits. Down with stereotypes!

MICHAEL KIRBY