

## AUSTRALIAN DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION

## FOREWORD

THE HON JUSTICE MICHAEL KIRBY AC CMG  
PATRON OF THE ASSOCIATION

Once again, I offer a few words as Patron of the Association.

I congratulate all of those who have contributed to making the year past, which was a difficult one, notable for achievements relevant to the lives of those living with Down Syndrome and their families.

The year has been difficult because funding, which had formerly been provided by the Federal Government, was cut completely from 1 July 1995. One wonders how such decisions are made. In hard economic times, it is inevitable that hard decisions will be resolved upon. But to delete funding for such a productive, effective and enterprising body seems unfair. Let us hope that it will be changed. It is in the interests of the whole Australian community to contribute to the "can do" and "self-help" principle which has motivated our Association.

Three important events in the past year need to be mentioned.

- \* The Apex Clubs of Australia accepted Down Syndrome as their National Service Scheme for 1995-6. About six hundred Apex Clubs throughout our country will be raising funds for resources within the Apex Foundation to support causes relevant to Down Syndrome, including the financial stability of our Association;
- \* The inaugural Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Down Syndrome was hosted by the Association in Darwin in July 1995. It was a grea

success. It forged links with related bodies throughout the region. The next such meeting will be in Singapore in May 1996. We can all share our common experience and commitment to justice for all and equal opportunity. These are basic human rights; and

- \* Associated with the Darwin conference was the first meeting of the National Advisory Council on Down Syndrome. Its Chairman is Professor Roy Brown of the Flinders University of South Australia. It will provide expert advice on educational, medical, legal, media and other issues. It will be a vital resource for the Association and for governments and officials throughout the country.

One of the happiest events of my year occurred on my birthday in March 1995. That day, I launched an art exhibition at the Rocks in Sydney. The paintings and drawings were the handiwork of gifted artists living with Down Syndrome. It was a joyous occasion topped off when the artists and their families sang "Happy Birthday" for me. I could not have wished for a more welcome present. It is a privilege to be associated with such fellow citizens and their families. In the Association they have a worthy champion for their fundamental rights.

MICHAEL KIRBY  
PATRON