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MATURE AGED GAYS 19TH
BIRTHDAY PARTY

11 September 2010

The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG

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SATURDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2010

Michael Kirby turned up to help celebrate the 19th birthday of MAG. His partner, Johan van Vloten, was not there as he was laid low by flu.

Michael Kirby expressed congratulations to MAG for putting emphasis on happiness and friendship when so many other nasty people in the world wanted to make life difficult for gays. He expressed surprise and sadness that this antagonistic attitude was usually the outcome of irrational religious views.

Michael described two new international bodies to which he had been appointed since his retirement from the High Court of Australia:

- * The first is the Eminent Persons Group investigating the future of the Commonwealth of Nations. This is relevant to gays because in 43 out of 54 countries of the Commonwealth (the old British Empire) the inherited anti-gay criminal laws remain in place. They oppress gay men; burden GLBTIQ people with shame and stigma; and impede the struggle against HIV.

- * The second is the Global Commission on HIV and the Law of the United Nations Development Programme. This has been established by Helen Clark, former New Zealand Prime Minister who is now the head of UNDP. It aims at changing the laws that impede the global effort to reduce the spread of HIV. This means

the laws that consign women to a second-class status; that add to the costs of anti-retroviral drugs through patent law regimes; and criminalise men who have sex with men, injecting drug users and sex workers.

Michael Kirby encouraged celebration and congratulations for MAG. But he said that everyone should do what they can to change the world for the better. And that often means reforming the law and getting rid of irrational prejudice and violence.

Michael joined in cutting the MAG birthday cake, joking that he was getting into practice for a wedding cake, when that became available in Australia.

S.O.