

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY 2017

MEDIA RELEASE:

21 March 2017

World Down Syndrome Day, the 21st of March, is an international awareness day to promote a better understanding of Down syndrome, the vital and active role that people with Down syndrome play in our communities and the actions needed to be taken to ensure that people with Down syndrome are able to realise their fundamental human rights. Down Syndrome Australia welcomes the opportunity to be part of this global celebration of people with Down syndrome and effort to combat stigma and misunderstanding about Down syndrome.

This year the theme for World Down Syndrome Day is "My Voice, My Community." As part of our celebrations for this day, Down Syndrome Australia with the support of the Parliamentary Friends of Down Syndrome are hosting a World Down Syndrome Day morning tea at Parliament House on 22 March. This annual event is an opportunity to bring together politicians, key stakeholders and people with Down syndrome and their families to celebrate this important day.

This year, we are pleased that we have two people with Down syndrome, our South Australian Member Ambassadors, James White and Zoe Kyriazopoulos who will be speaking at the event. We will also be joined by Disability Discrimination Commissioner Alastair McEwin who will talk about the importance of community understanding of intellectual disabilities and the barriers to inclusion faced by people with Down Syndrome.

This event will also be an opportunity to showcase the latest international awareness film produced by CoorDown. This film uses humour to address serious issues around the use of the terminology "special needs" and highlights that the fundamental needs of people with Down syndrome are the same as everyone else- the need for education, employment, access to health care, and the community.

Down Syndrome Australia CEO, Dr Ellen Skladzien said "It is vitally important that we address the stigma and lack of community understanding about Down syndrome. A recent survey we conducted of more than 800 families of people with Down syndrome found that approximately a third of people with Down syndrome and their families had been discouraged from taking part in everyday community activities or education because of their disability."

World Down Syndrome Day is an opportunity to dispel the myths that surround intellectual disability and to highlight the active potential of people with Down syndrome. As part of our countdown to World Down Syndrome Day, Down Syndrome Australia has profiled 21 people over 21 days to highlight the many different ways that people with Down syndrome are



involved in their community. These stories can be found at:
http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/news/wdsd/21_stories.html.

For media queries contact media@downsyndrome.org.au