

JOINT MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT & CEO

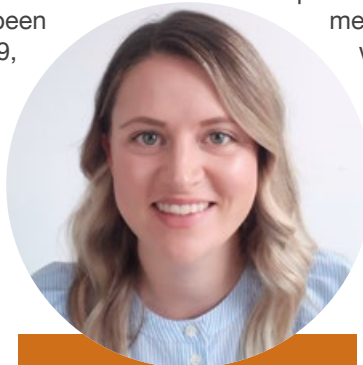
2019-20 marked another solid year for Down Syndrome NSW. Progressing the Association and ensuring financial security were the main objectives for 2020 and it is with pleasure we advise that both have been achieved. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, we continued to deliver professional services to our members and were able to deliver a surplus.

One of the highlights of the year was the 2019 Health Conference in September, focusing on the challenges of ageing for people with Down syndrome. The conference was a resounding success bringing together expert information and lived experience with a practical focus. We aim to continue to deliver high quality services across the lifespan from prenatal through to older age and to continue to support our members through life's transitions.

In February 2020, the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability convened hearings on health issues in Sydney. We had strong representation from people with Down syndrome and their families throughout the two weeks of hearings. Members of Down Syndrome NSW were among those who shared their personal experiences and shone a light on the importance of people with Down syndrome being treated with dignity and respect by those in the health profession. Further we led the Down Syndrome Federation's submission to the Commission on Health issues.

Across the country we all faced the sudden impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the uncertainty and social isolation that surrounded it. Our members were worried about the loss of their routine social avenues and its impact on their health and wellbeing. We worked with our members to provide new opportunities for social connection, information and support. We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of our exceptional staff in adapting to a new way of working to ensure continuity of services to our members. Our members with Down syndrome showed great resilience adapting to the online programs with many of them thriving in the new environment, developing new relationships and strengthening their communication, literacy and IT skills. Their families and carers, as usual, rose to the challenges enabling on line participation and we have heard many stories of the joy they felt in observing their sons and daughters engagement with the online activities.

A number of initiatives supported increased reach to our regional members this year. Travel scholarships were sponsored for the health conference for regional members and planned regional seminars were transitioned to online forums further increasing the reach across NSW. The Staying Connected and online peer support sessions opened new windows of opportunities for participation from anywhere in NSW. Board meetings are now convened online enabling wider representation of our membership.



Hayley Warren, President

"We aim to continue to deliver high quality services...and to support our members through life's transitions."



Jennifer Evans, CEO

This year was also a time of change in the staff and board of Down Syndrome NSW. We welcomed Nicholas Gotsis and Gemma Namey to the board and farewelled President Jason Lloyd, Vice President Greg Simmons, Treasurer Michael Hogan, Mark Bezzina and Megan Smith who resigned from their positions throughout the year. A special thanks to Jason and Greg who generously gave their time for years to lead the Association. We also farewelled CEO Kathy Chapman and a number of dedicated staff - Carolyn Frichot (Communications Manager) and Information and Support Officers, Gillian Lipitz, Jo See, Megan Smith, Lakshmi Ramjas, Marissa Rafati and UP!Club Coordinator Flavio Fernandez-Maldonado.

We would like to thank Kathy for her contribution to the Association, particularly for her work in advocacy and the Health Conference and her leadership during the initial response to the critical impact of COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the year we welcomed several new staff - Kathryn Hammond (Community Events Coordinator), Bernadette van Wijnen (Information and Support Manager), Jessica Viera (Up Up & Away Coordinator) and in May our new CEO Jennifer Evans.

We would like to thank our board members for their support and hard work and all the staff of Down Syndrome NSW and the many volunteers, donors and supporters for their contributions in 2020. As we enter our 40th year as an Association we look forward to continuing to support our members through all life stages, whilst being particularly mindful of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hayley Warren
President

Jennifer Evans
CEO