

Down Syndrome Forum of S.A.

Fund Raising No. 08 800619 000 8

Down-Sindroom Forum van S.A.

Fondsinsameringnommer 08 800619 000 8



"Saam Sien Ons Kans"

"Together We Will Cope"

28 February 1992

Codesa Secretariat
Working Group 2
PO Box 307

Isando
1600

Dear Sir.

I am writing to you in my capacity both as the Chairperson of the Down Syndrome Forum of South Africa (an organisation of parents) and as the mother of a child with a mental handicap ie Down Syndrome. Our concern is that the special needs of the mentally handicapped, which include early stimulation, education, health and legal rights, may not be met in any new constitution for a future South Africa. At the present time, there are many persons with a mental handicap, especially in the disadvantaged communities, who have had, for example, virtually no stimulation, no education, no basic health care and the parents have had no financial help. Moreover, there is no place for many of these people to go when eventually their parents die. This is a situation which we strongly feel should not be perpetuated and which needs correction.

What we are afraid of, and what in practice very often happens, is that the special needs of the mentally disabled/handicapped (as opposed to the physically disabled and the mentally ill) will either be completely overlooked or grossly minimised, in relation to the needs of disabled people as a group.

We are also concerned that the facilities for the mentally handicapped may be neglected in any future constitution, and that the financial burden for parents is going to become greater than it is at present. The very least that we would wish for is a separate Charter of Rights for the Mentally Handicapped, and our Forum, together with others in this field, are at present working on this.

As very concerned parents, we would like information on what is being planned for this group of persons, since we obviously have

a keen interest and are very directly affected by future policies. To this end we would very much appreciate it if either
a) one of our representatives would attend any of your working committee discussions on this matter, even as an observer, or
b) a place could be found on your relevant committee for a representative of the mentally handicapped and their parents.

We would appreciate a reply to this letter and will be only too happy to co-operate with any working group and supply any further information.

Yours sincerely,



(Mrs) Jean Drew, Chairperson. Down Syndrome Forum of South Africa