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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Kua hinga te kauri o te wao nui a Tāne' The kauri has fallen in the sacred forest of Tāne**

Eunice Kennedy Shriver, a member of one of the most prominent families in American politics and a pioneer in the effort to improve the lives of people with intellectual disabilities, died early Tuesday morning at Cape Cod Hospital in Hyannis, Massachusetts. She was 88.

The founder of Special Olympics Eunice Kennedy Shriver started from her own backyard in 1962 and created what has become a rapidly growing global sports and human rights movement. Special Olympics globally has grown to 3.1 million athletes with over 21 million active supporters in more than 180 countries.

In a statement Mrs Shriver's family said "She set out to change the world and to change us, and she did that and more. She founded the movement that became Special Olympics, the largest movement for acceptance and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities in the history of the world. Her work transformed the lives of hundreds of millions of people across the globe, and they in turn are her living legacy."

Special Olympics New Zealand has, inspired by her vision, the courage of more than 5,000 athletes and the hard work of over 2,300 volunteers emerged as one of the leading Special Olympics programmes. Today Special Olympics New Zealand athletes compete in 16 sports in over 185 events a year.

"We are tremendously grateful for the extreme outpouring of support and prayer from the public as we honour our beloved founder", said Special Olympics President and COO Brady Lum, "Today we celebrate the life of a woman who had the vision to create our movement. It is an enormous loss, but I know we can rest assured that her legacy will live on through her family, friends, and the millions of people around the world who she touched and transformed. In her memory, we will continue to work to bring her powerful vision to life to

change the lives of those with intellectual disabilities, their families and communities, using sports as the catalyst for respect, acceptance and inclusion."

David Rutherford, Chairman of Special Olympics New Zealand and Board member of Special Olympics International said "Now is a time to reflect on the powerful vision of Eunice Kennedy Shriver and the positive change it has brought to the lives of millions of people with intellectual disabilities around the world, including thousands of people in New Zealand. Eunice Kennedy Shriver, inspired by her family, not only showed vision that has changed individual lives globally but she also leaves her mark in legislation, in education and in changing long term perception. She showed the world that love is a doing word. We will make the torch she lit shine brighter and further. It is a sad day but also a time to reflect on the life of one of the world's greatest humanitarians."

"The mark that she leaves will make us all more determined to push harder for the rights of all human beings to enjoy quality of life. We need to collectively ensure that we continue to support the legacy that she leaves through her family" Mr Rutherford said.

Tributes are pouring in from around the world from athletes and from Presidents. Tributes can be posted on [www.eunicekennedyshriver.org](http://www.eunicekennedyshriver.org).

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*For more information please contact:*

*David Rutherford*  
*Chairman*  
*Special Olympics New Zealand*  
*Tel: (021) 919 096*  
*Email: [David.rutherford@gibsonsheat.com](mailto:David.rutherford@gibsonsheat.com)*

*Kathy Gibson*  
*Chief Executive Office*  
*Special Olympics New Zealand*  
*Tel: (027)567-9496*  
*Email: [kathyg@specialolympics.org.nz](mailto:kathyg@specialolympics.org.nz)*