

# Nothing Is Impossible

Adventures in cerebral palsy


By Neil McLeod



the spastic centre



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From an unpublished manuscript, 1986  
Our gratitude to Jan Bradbury for her work in the preparation of this book.

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## Foreword

This is the story of two unique people, Audrie and Neil McLeod, who struggled against the prevailing beliefs of a particular time in Australian history to find causes and solutions for cerebral palsy. It documents the growth of an organisation that would provide the template for so many families also facing the issues resulting from the disabilities of their children. It shows what can happen when the community understands and responds to a call for justice for some of its most vulnerable members.

The Spastic Centre of New South Wales could never have come into existence without the collective power of parents who challenged the status quo which treated them as victims and who were determined that the needs of their child would not be dismissed nor neglected. It is also an Australian expression of the story of mateship, of a 'fair go', of people supporting and nurturing each other, of community development, of conflict, turbulence and change.

This is the story of my family – particularly my sister, Jennifer, who started my parents on their life pathways.


Robin Way

2006



## Acknowledgement

The first version of this book was published by the Simul Press in Japan in 1994 as a consequence of the deep and enduring ties formed between The Spastic Centre of NSW and the McLeod Society of Japan, in particular the late Mr Takeo Noda, Dr Takahashi, and Professor Ohtsuka. We are indebted to Professors Toshihisa Nagasaka and Hideo Suzuki, their families and Mrs Rie Amijima for their assistance in ensuring that this work is available to a wider audience.



## *A Message from the Board of The Spastic Centre of New South Wales*

It is said that the most just, noble and honourable visions are often unattainable because of the littleness of those who strive to achieve them. Even emperors and kings cannot do it alone. But it is with shared purpose, common spirit, collaborative doing and the power of collective thinking that such visions have been realised. And so it is with The Spastic Centre of New South Wales.

Neil McLeod's personal account of the growth of a remarkable organisation not only traces an important and salient history but as well, instructs those of us today to continue going forward, challenging the new horizons' boundless goals. It was my privilege to hear Neil McLeod speak of the most critical ingredient in all human endeavour – the giving of something of ourselves.

That giving, begun by Neil McLeod and his wife Audrie on behalf of Australia's children and adults with cerebral palsy and their families was, and remains, the precious gift of opportunity.

The Spastic Centre is proud to publish Neil McLeod's valuable work, 'Nothing is Impossible'.

Marelle Thornton AM

President

### PLEASE NOTE:

The language used in this book is a reflection of the era in which it was written, i.e. the period between 1945 and 1986.

To preserve the provenance of this rich history, the manuscript has been reproduced with minimal editing.

## *Dedication*

This Presentation was made to

The Board of Directors, The Spastic Centre of New South Wales

on behalf of all the antecedent members of the Board who, over the years,  
supported us loyally in pursuit of our objectives ~ to raise the level of our cerebral palsied children  
as far as possible in education ~ medicine ~ engineering ~ social awareness.

To mark the occasion of my retirement  
from The Spastic Centre of New South Wales after forty-two years of service and  
my 77th birthday on the eighth day of July, 1986.

Neil McLeod



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## Preface

In 1970, the Committee of International Geographical Year launched a transcontinental survey of Antarctica. It involved a coast to coast journey of over four thousand kilometres of relatively unexplored country. Two teams were involved and they battled their way through high winds and temperatures ranging to seventy degrees minus. The actual journey took them four months, but preparations involved two years and millions of dollars.

The men in the field were beset with unimaginable difficulties – snow bridges which collapsed over unplumbed crevasses involving the constant threat of loss of life, to say nothing of the physical risks inherent in a journey through the trackless wastes, when blizzards and whiteouts meant instant obliteration, in the primordial environment of Antarctica. Who are the men responsible for such a project? Are they scientific workers interested in measurement, or explorers filling in a forgotten corner of the world's environment? Or is it perhaps, a lifestyle or sport like mountaineering which depends on checking the forces against you in climate, physical and psychological endurance, where the hazards you encounter are matched against the courage and determination which you can muster? We can but wonder!

This book describes a journey of a different kind. It is a journey that started in the mid-thirties, and the end is not yet in sight. But it serves as an enduring model for the hazardous journey we have described above. The people who accompanied me on this expedition had to put up with hardships that were far worse, because they persisted throughout the whole of their lifetime. They had no scientific knowledge to point the way. Their mountain peaks were not named, there was no map. Instead of snow-filled icy crevasses they had to contend with neurophysiological barriers of an entirely different sort, but just as difficult to surmount.

For those who made this journey I commend this book. The rare courage, the determination of them all, guided us through the forty years of strife-torn wandering.

I dedicate this book with admiration, to the children of The Spastic Centre of New South Wales and the adults of Centre Industries.

**This is their life's journey.**