

Stand Up - Ron Castan Awards
Sidra Kranz Moshinsky
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It is a privilege and a pleasure to say a few words this evening in my capacity as a Stand Up board member and as someone who has a personal connection with the Castan family, many of whom are here this evening, and the great man himself, Ron.

While the awards are a tribute to Ron Castan as a warrior for social justice, a brilliant intellect & lawyer and a committed member of the tribe, my memories of Ron are mostly from childhood so I would like to pay personal tribute: that I can swim is thanks to the lessons that were held in the Castan pool; that I read and write Hebrew (somewhat) are thanks to the Hebrew lessons that were held in the Castan home; and that I grew up with a strong sense of community is thanks largely to the vibrant Jewish life that was created and centred around Hawthorn & Kew, Preshil, Hashy, Distelfink Gallery, doll-making workshops with Mirka Mora, Purim parties with dads in drag - again with the Castan family central to this.

While these memories are mostly warm and fuzzy, I knew at the time and looking back I know it now, that I was incredibly fortunate to grow up surrounded by people who embodied commitment, community and taking a stand. Ron's work on behalf of Eddie Mabo, the Yorta Yorta people, the Jewish community and in ensuring civil liberties and human rights were safeguarded for all, were talked about - at once legendary but importantly, something that one did. If you have the skills and capacity to make a difference, you should. It's as simple and complex as that.

For all of here whose lives were touched by Ron in big ways and small, we know how powerful and indelible such role modelling can be. The late Ron Castan was a giant and few or any of us can replicate what he did. But as we look into the future, imagining and working towards the best that society can be, we do so standing on the shoulders of giants such as him.

It is a privilege to serve as a board member of Stand Up, a position that I have held for the last few years. I am proud of the work that we do in our three key areas.

One area is supporting the Sudanese refugee community. We were strangers in a strange land and have a sense of how alien and unwelcoming Australia can be. By providing tutoring and mentoring to Sudanese students in their last few years of secondary school in the I-Can program, we contribute to educational attainment, key to the ability to make life-long choices. While too often the media and society focus on the problems, Stand Up embodies the concept that it is better to light a flame than curse the

darkness. In working with the women in the community, many of them mothers of these students, we know that it takes a village to raise a child and that we need a multi-touch approach if we are going to make a difference.

Stand Up is also active in the realm of indigenous programs, providing opportunities for the Jewish community to engage, learn and also assist through the Yorta Yorta B'Yachad program and Derech Eretz, that sees young members of the Jewish community volunteer to spend their holidays providing positive and structured activities for the young people of Toomelah and Boggabilla. We acknowledge Ron's immense contributions in the area of native title and one that has been continued by his daughter Melissa.

The third area of focus for Stand Up is in inspiring and equipping members of the Jewish community to work towards social justice for all. The Torah instructs us 'Tzedek, tzedek, tirdof' ('Justice, justice you shall pursue') Deut 16:20. Interpreters suggest that justice is repeated to instil in us that legal justice is only half the story. It's also justice on the streets, in the schools, in the workplace, in the economy - social justice - that must also be sought. And notably, the Hebrew for pursue is singular not plural. It's not enough that the community pursues justice (although that is important) or that the lawyers pursue it, each one of us must pursue it, in whichever way we can. For some it's by volunteering and taking action, for others it's by advocating and speaking up, and for others it's by supporting financially. Through Stand Up ABC, our program for Bnei Mitzvah children, working with schools, young adults in our fellowship and other opportunities, Stand Up seeks to instil this sense of individual responsibility. We may not arrive at justice, but we will not cease either

The pursuit of social justice is one that demands energy, commitment, strategy, vision and persistence. Tonight we honour two special people for their tireless endeavours on behalf of bettering humanity and can think of no better way to do this than by linking them with the legacy of the late Ron Castan.

It is a privilege to welcome Rob Lehrer this evening, who will speak on behalf of the Castan family.

Rob is the son in law of Ron, and is married to Melissa Castan. He is involved in family business, philanthropy and progressive causes, in Australia and Israel, working behind the scenes with a number of Indigenous leaders, environmental issues and political causes.

Thank you Rob.