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Ron Castan AM QC is finished. His spirit lives. His own words stand as testament to the kind of man he was, and why our loss is so deep and our grief so profound. Ron was a remarkably decent man whose heart and conscience always guided his intellect. Indigenous Australians have lost a champion: the entire country has lost a treasure... For almost 30 years Ron played a leading role in some of the most significant Australian litigation involving the rights of Indigenous peoples: Mabo, Koowartha, Tassie Dams, Onus & Franklin are but a few of the most well known cases to which he brought the power of his considerable legal skills and the grace of his personality.

In 1971, Ron became the founding secretary of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. In 1982, the Mabo case was begun with Ron as senior counsel. He was by our side in the political struggle in the 1993 negotiations to honour Eddy Mabo and the others who had fought so hard to secure our land rights. While the justice of a cause should win a case, it cannot do so without the catalyst of human energy and advocacy. Ron gave the energy of his life and channelled his immense ability into the cause of justice. Not only for Indigenous Australians. As he said, justice is meaningless if it is not extended to all and a belief in justice is empty unless it is expressed in action.

-- Mick Dodson & David Allen

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By any standards, Ron Castan was a remarkable man. His activities and interests spread far and wide across the nation's legal, commercial, political, artistic and philanthropic life - not to mention his family, and his prominent place amongst the Jewish community of this country, and overseas. But most of all, it was Ron's personal qualities that endeared him to his many friends, colleagues and associates. Blessed with acute intelligence and formidable abilities as a negotiator and lawyer, he was nevertheless unassuming in nature, always kind and considerate to others, especially those in need, always ready to hear and discuss ideas - however speculative or bizarre - and devoted to the purging of injustice wherever he saw it. To me, he demonstrated the highest principles of his faith, his profession, and of caring humanity. He showed us through his daily work and relationships, what a human being can achieve for the betterment of the community. We are all in his debt.

Perhaps others can now pursue these various tasks - but I fear nobody can do it quite like Ron. He is greatly missed, he is irreplaceable, but his work and personal example will, I'm sure, inspire many to carry on regardless.

-- Bryan Keon-Cohen QC

For more on Ron Castan visit: <http://www.law.monash.edu.au/castancentre/roncastan.html>

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