

Rodney Syme died 20 October 2021



We received the sad news of the death of Rodney Syme (82) this week.

As an urologic surgeon, Rodney was confronted with severely suffering patients, and being unable to relieve the pain started to go public with statements on assistance with dying representing his views as a humanitarian. In 2005 he finally went public and admitted to having provided Nembutal to a terminal cancer patient: *“I am not doing it quietly anymore, I’ve sailed close to the wind, no doubt about it, but the law is hypocritical and I’m not the only doctor who is operating in this murky terrain. It’s just that I’m prepared to say so publicly”*.

Because of his continued openness on his views and actions, he was banned by the Australian Medical Board, a ban he successfully appealed. After that Rodney Syme became the main advocate for the 2017 Victorian Euthanasia Law, the first on the Australian continent.

Many professionals applying the euthanasia law, pay tribute to Rodney’s work and dedication, without which the euthanasia practice would not have been possible as it is now.

Rodney Syme became involved in the international field as member of the WF Board from 2008 – 2014, and host and organiser of the successful 2010 WF Conference in Melbourne.

Dr Rodney Syme has been recognized as Humanist of the Year 2017, by the Council of Australian Humanist Societies. In 2019 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia.

In September 2014 at the 18th World Federation of the Right to Die Societies in Chicago, Rodney Syme was awarded the Health Professional Award for the healthcare worker who had created global change.

WFRtDS will remember Rodney as a true and loyal advocate for the right to die in general and the legalisation of voluntary assisted dying in Australia, and above all a good friend. May he rest in peace.