Andrew Casey (1954 – 2018)

Eulogy delivered at Macquarie Park, Sydney February 6, 2018

According to Israeli poet, Zelda:

Each of us has a name

given by the stars

and given by our neighbors

Each of us has a name

given by our celebrations

and given by our work

And indeed Andrew’s friendship and his work has touched us all – as a comrade, friend, cobber, mensch - and his life’s work has been creative, tireless, driven and passionate.

Always about others and never about himself.

Like so many of you I’ve known, conspired, gossiped and worked with Andrew for many years…. and over countless languid coffees I’ve come to understand Andrew perhaps most definitively as the great Bridge Builder.

He was Linked-In before Linked-In was invented. No wonder Facebook was his second home.

Andrew was driven by his two relentless passions: Social Justice and Jewish values.

To him they were one and the same: fairness, humanity, and kindness matched by friendships and inclusiveness.

A famous Jewish sage, Rabbi Judah HaNassi, said in Pirkei Avot (the “Ethics of the Fathers 3:1”):

*Which is the right path for a person to choose for themselves?*

*Whatever is harmonious for the one who does it, and harmonious for humankind.*

And so Andrew sought to create that harmonious world by connecting:

* connecting disparate people that needed a stronger collective voice,
* connecting people with information and news necessary for an informed and ethical life and
* connecting people from disparate places to learn, share and belong.

Andrew built a bridge between the trade union movement and the Jewish community helping convene the first ever Trade Union Passover Seder. It was a first for both communities, and was the first event held at the newly refurbished NSW Trades Hall.

I can still remember the Jewish community leading the song ‘Ma Nishtenah Haleila Hazeh?’ (why is this night different from other nights?) and fellow unionists joining in, not to mention the very robust conclusion of the evening with Solidarity Forever!

Andrew had nothing less than a global vision for peace in the Middle East. With that long view he helped establish TULIP with unions in 3 continents to encourage dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian trade unions.

Andrew was building bridges when he connected the Palestinian Ambassador with Australia’s Hadassah President leading to Project Rozana and a memorandum of Understanding between the Palestinian Ministry of Health and Hadassah Hospital to upskill Palestinian doctors and build a more robust Palestinian health system.

Andrew was building bridges between faith-based organizations, trade unions and community organisations on many fronts. He was active in the Sydney Alliance on behalf of Emanuel Synagogue. And he was a great supporter of Together for Humanity – an interfaith and multicultural organisation – working with schools and their students to embrace diversity and reject demonisation of the ‘other’. He ‘stacked’ the last fundraising event hosting several tables of supporters in a magic night.

Andrew was building bridges globally, linking trade unionists and activists the world over through LaborStart. Calling for digital action and keeping the world informed on workers struggles and their quest for social justice.

And most recently, Andrew was building bridges to the next generation organising scholarships for young refugees enabling them to have opportunities in this, their new country.

So many activities – and so many more unmentioned.

A life lived fully and selflessly - driven by his commitment to Social Justice and Jewish Values. Andrew gave daily expression to the Jewish term Tikkun olam –to ‘repair the world’

As another famous Jewish sage, Rabbi Gamliel, said also in the Pirkei Avot (3:2):

*Those who work for the community should do so for the sake of Heaven;*

*for then merit of their ancestors shall aid them,*

*and their righteousness shall endure forever*

Andrew, your righteousness will endure forever.

Shalom my friend

Shalom chaver