

Citation for the Award of Honorary Doctor of Medical Science The Reverend Dr Ruth Redpath AO

The common saying that death and taxes are the only two certainties in life, betrays a pervasive cultural discomfort with death and the process of dying. When Ruth Redpath graduated MBBS from the University of Melbourne in 1964, there were no formal palliative care services in Australia – our cultural unease with death revealed in the lack of services catering to the needs of the dying.

Ruth Redpath has spent her life and career working to improve the lives and deaths of those who need palliative care. After training first in surgery, then in radiation oncology, Dr Redpath observed, and was impressed by, the UK system of palliative care services while working at St Bartholomew's and the Great Ormond St Hospital for Sick Children in London. She was also influenced by the pioneering work of Cicely Saunders who established the first purpose-built hospice in the UK. Upon her return to Australia, Dr Redpath, acutely aware of the comparative shortcomings of palliative care services in Australia, determined to improve them and set about building a model of specialist and community based care to meet the complex and individual needs of the terminally ill.

Ruth Redpath's involvement in the establishment of the Victorian Association for Hospice and Palliative Care (now Palliative Care Victoria) and leadership in the development of protocols and care pathways for terminally ill patients has been instrumental in the improvement of palliative care across the country.

Both Palliative Care Australia and Cancer Council Victoria have also benefited immensely from her expertise and leadership. Her fifteen years service on the Board of Cancer Council Victoria included seven years as President of the Council. David Hill AO (Director of the Council during her Presidency) describes her leadership in this role as effective and understated, and notes that the confidence others had in her leadership was built on her mastery of content, transparent integrity and responsiveness.

In 2003, Ruth was made an Officer in the Order of Australia for service to the community in the initiation and establishment of palliative care services in Australia, as an educator in the field of professional practice, and as an advocate for improved services.

While acting as a fulltime carer for her husband, Ruth Redpath discerned a call to ordained ministry and commenced theological studies. She was made deacon and priest in 2007 and has served at St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne since 2010.

During her medical career Ruth Redpath pushed the edge of the medical care paradigm – reforming medical and community practice and government policy to improve the quality of life during the last days of countless Victorians. The dedication and service Ruth Redpath demonstrated during her medical career is now expressed through her pastoral role as Canon Pastor at St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne.

In her life's work Rev Dr Ruth Redpath has manifested the capacity to plan and influence complex organisational change together with a conspicuous and resolute commitment to the welfare of others. The combination of these qualities in any individual is a cause for celebration, and particularly, as with Ruth Redpath, when they have been a catalyst to radical and beneficial social change.