



## **Richard Pratt**

Richard Pratt (1934-2009) was a visionary Australian entrepreneur and a leading philanthropist who built his family's small box-making company into the world's largest privately owned packaging and recycling company. Visy now employs over 9,000 people across more than 150 sites in Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Since 2000 Visy has been named regularly in corporation reputation surveys as one of Australia's leading companies for environmental performance.

Born in Gdansk, Poland, Richard migrated to Australia with his Jewish refugee parents in 1939 on the eve of World War II. He grew up in Shepparton, a fruit growing rural town two and half hours north of Melbourne, where his parents established an orchard. He completed his education at University High School in Melbourne and at the University of Melbourne, where he took up acting, eventually travelling to London with the cast of the legendary Australian play "Summer of the Seventeenth Doll".

From 1969, when he assumed leadership of the family company, until his death in 2009, Richard not only developed Visy as an international business, but became a community leader and an innovative and generous philanthropist, through the establishment of the Pratt Foundation in 1978.

Amongst the many public service roles he undertook, Richard was the Foundation Chancellor of Melbourne's Swinburne University of Technology for eight years(1992-2000); President of the Victorian Arts Centre Trust for eight years; and the Foundation Chair of the Australian Foundation for Culture and the Humanities, later rebranded as the Australian Business Arts Foundation. From 2007 to 2009 he was the President of the Carlton Football Club, where he had been player, director, and donor over some 50 years.

Amongst his many awards and honours, Richard received Honorary Doctorates from Monash University, the University of Melbourne, Swinburne University of Technology, Ben Gurion University of the Negev (Israel), and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel). In 2000 he received the inaugural Prime Minister's Award for Philanthropy from Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Barak at a ceremony at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Between 2002 and 2006 Richard focused his attention on water and the challenges of how to manage Australia's water resources more productively. In March 2007, Richard and Jeanne Pratt jointly received the prestigious Woodrow Wilson Award from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at the Smithsonian Institution.

In April, 2008, Richard joined Australia's Governor-General, Major General Michael Jeffery and Israel's President Shimon Peres to dedicate The Park of the Australian Soldier, in Beersheba, Israel, as a memorial to the Australian Light Horse. The Park was a Pratt Foundation initiative.

Richard died on April 28, 2009.