

Chapter 1

A Legal Life

*Ross Cranston**

Australia is building a strong tradition in judicial biography. Philip Ayres has completed two excellent biographies of justices of the High Court: the first on Sir Owen Dixon, one of the great common lawyers, the other of Sir Ninian Stephen, who went on to be Governor-General.¹ Professor Ayres writes as an historian. He is particularly revealing on judicial politics and the extra-judicial careers of his subjects (for example, Dixon as Australia's war-time ambassador to the United States and Stephen as peacemaker in Northern Ireland), but he is also sure-footed in outlining some of the key judicial contributions of both men. The biography of Mary Gaudron, the first woman on the High Court, is especially interesting on her background in western New South Wales and on the obstacles she faced in establishing herself, despite an outstanding record as a law student.² Then there are the biographies of High Court judges who had important political careers such as Sir Garfield Barwick and Lionel Murphy within living memory, and Sir Samuel Griffith and HB Higgins earlier.³ Focusing on that aspect of their

* In preparing this essay I draw heavily on the record of interviews Paul recorded with Lesley Dingle for the Squire Law Library, Eminent Scholars Archive on 23 November 2010 and 23 June 2011 (available on the library's website, referred to as Interview November 2010 and Interview June 2011 respectively), what Paul said on his retirement from the Federal Court (Federal Court of Australia, Ceremonial Sitting of the Full Court to Farewell the Honourable Justice Finn, Adelaide, 4 July 2012 (Ceremonial Sitting)) and on the account of his life Paul has provided me. I am especially grateful regarding Paul's early life to Justice Applegarth, but also to Justices Peter J Lyons and Ann Lyons, of the Queensland Supreme Court, and to librarians at that court, David Bratchford and Brendon Copley, and to the former librarian, Aladin Rahemtula, someone who has done much to advance Queensland legal history.

1 Philip Ayres, *Owen Dixon* (Melbourne University Press, 2003); Philip Ayres, *Fortunate Voyager: The Worlds of Ninian Stephen* (Melbourne University Press, 2013).

2 Pamela Burton, *From Moree to Mabo: The Mary Gaudron Story* (University of Western Australia, 2010).

3 Roger Joyce, *Samuel Walker Griffith* (University of Queensland Press, 1984); John Rickard, *HB Higgins: The Rebel as Judge* (George Allen & Unwin, 1984); David

This is a preview. Not all pages are shown.