



Joint presentation of the Ngara Yura Committee of the Judicial Commission of NSW and the Francis Forbes Society for Australian Legal History

Chair: The Hon. Justice Phillip Boulten, Supreme Court of NSW, Ngara Yura Committee

Presenters: Anna Harding (Project Director of Towards Truth)

and Panel: Jonathon Hunyor, Shane Phillips, Kate Sinclair



ORDER OF EVENTS

1. **WELCOME and INTRODUCTION** – the Hon. Justice Phillip Boulten, Supreme Court of NSW, Ngarra Yura Committee
2. **PRESENTATION** – A brief introduction to Towards Truth by Anna Harding
3. **PANEL DISCUSSION** – Jonathon Hunyor, Shane Phillips, Kate Sinclair
4. **THANKS and CLOSE OF PROCEEDINGS** – by the Chair

TOWARDS TRUTH PROJECT

Towards Truth is a partnership between the Indigenous Law Centre and the Justice and Equity Centre (formerly the Public Interest Advocacy Centre or PIAC). The project is researching the vast body of laws and policies that have impacted Aboriginal people since 1788, broken down into four main ‘themes’ – Country, Kinship, Law and Culture, and People.

The panel discussion will focus on the current Towards Truth subjects: contemporary policing and criminal offences, and the present work on historical policing.

Towards Truth is the first attempt to map in detail how decisions of Parliaments and Governments have dispossessed and disempowered First Nations people, and where they have sought to protect and provide for reparation. It does this by compiling:

- laws and policies that have impacted First Nations people since 1788
- parliamentary debates that show what the Parliament intended when those laws were passed
- articles and reports that discuss and analyse how these laws and policies operated in practice, and
- case studies that show their practical effects.

Its work has begun in NSW, with plans to expand to other jurisdictions.

Towards Truth advances the Uluru Statement from the Heart by providing a foundational resource to strengthen First Nations community truth-telling and to support First Nations people seeking to understand how the laws and policies of the day impacted their own families and communities.

Towards Truth is also a resource for policymakers, researchers and educators investigating Australia's relationship with First Nations people, and a tool for advocates working to progress First Nations justice.

PRESENTERS AND PANELLISTS

Towards Truth / Justice and Equity Centre

Anna Harding – Anna is the Project Director of Towards Truth. She leads a team working with pro bono partners to document how laws and policies have impacted the lives of First Nations people in NSW. She joined the Justice and Equity Centre in October 2022.

Anna has over 15 years' experience in the not-for-profit and government sectors. Anna has primarily worked in native title and Aboriginal land rights, including at the NSW Aboriginal Land Council where she was the Principal Legal Officer. She has also held positions in Commonwealth and NSW Government Departments working primarily in native title.

Jonathan Hunyor – Jonathon has been the CEO of the Justice and Equity Centre since August 2016. He has over 25 years' experience working as a lawyer on social justice issues, including discrimination and human rights, migration and refugee law, Aboriginal land rights, criminal law, and coronial inquests.

Previous roles include Principal Legal Officer at the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency in Darwin and the Director of Legal Services at the Australian Human Rights Commission. Jonathon has taught discrimination law at the University of NSW and has published widely in academic and professional journals.

Kate Sinclair - Kate is a Dharug woman and solicitor at the Justice and Equity Centre. She works on police accountability, challenging unlawful police conduct with a focus on the impact of police practices on First Nations people. Kate is currently representing two mothers suing NSW Police following months of disruptive and intimidating visits to their homes, and also co-convening the Youth Justice Coalition with Mouny Aboriginal Youth & Community Services.

Before joining the JEC in 2022, Kate was a lawyer at Allens and the Chairperson of Ngalaya, the peak body for First Nations lawyers and law students in New South Wales.

Also on the Panel

Shane Phillips – Uncle Shane Phillips is the CEO and founder of the Tribal Warrior Association in Redfern, a non-profit organization focused on empowering mob through maritime training, mentoring, and community programs such as Clean Slate Without Prejudice , Never Going Back and H.O.M.E. For more info see: [Tribal Warrior](#).



FURTHER READING REGARDING THE TOWARDS TRUTH PROJECT

[About Towards Truth](#)

You can learn more about Towards Truth and see the research by scanning this QR Code or visiting towardstruth.org.au



PRIOR NGARA YURA COMMITTEE / FRANCIS FORBES SOCIETY JOINT PRESENTATIONS:

The initial premise was an annual lecture on Australian history insofar as it concerns the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and non-Indigenous Peoples. The history of Australia, including its legal history, has this relationship at its foundation: the history, in all its aspects, whether comfortable or not, whether intractable or not, should be recognised and discussed, not just as part of a national process of Reconciliation, but also as part of understanding the human foundations of our legal system, so that its future development and growth come from a shared and understood reality.

The initial lecture was given on 5 November 2020 – **Making the Past Visible: The Colonial Frontier Massacre Map Project and the Legacies of Frontier massacres**, delivered by Professor Lyndall Ryan AM FAHA, the University of Newcastle, chaired by Chief Justice James Allsop, President of the Forbes Society & the Hon Justice Lucy McCallum, NSW Court of Appeal and Chair of the Ngara Yura Committee.

4 November 2021 – **Making the Past Visible: The Legacies of the Protectionist Legislation** delivered by Mr Richard Weston, inaugural Deputy Children’s Guardian for Aboriginal Children and Young People in NSW together with members of Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation; chaired by Chief Justice Allsop.

10 November 2022 – **The fallacy of protectionism**, The Hon Lucy McCallum, Chief Justice of the ACT, chaired by the Hon Justice Rachel Pepper. The paper addressed the historical background to the so-called “protectionist” policies of the last century, their abject failure in achieving their stated goals of protecting First Nations peoples and the reckoning to be done to avoid such mistakes in the future.

5 November 2024 – **The history and personalities of the District Court’s Walama List** – a panel discussion exploring the history and personalities of the District Court’s Walama List. The List, commenced as a pilot in February 2022, provides a therapeutic and holistic approach to the sentencing of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. The Hon Justice Dina Yehia, chair of the [Ngara Yura Committee](#), introduced panellists Edwina Crawford (Director, Aboriginal Services Unit); her Honour Judge Sarah Hopkins (List Judge); Elder Aunty Marcia Ella-Duncan OAM; psychologist Vanessa Edwige and two practitioners in the list, Emma Hudson-Buhagiar (Senior Solicitor, Walama team, ALS) and Anthony Brookman (Senior Solicitor, Walama List, Office of the DPP NSW)

3 June 2025 – a presentation exploring the **Towards Truth** Research Project. Her Honour Judge Sarah Hopkins (Ngara Yura Committee) facilitated the presentation and introduced Jonathon Hunyor (CEO of the Justice and Equity Centre) and Elizabeth Clark (Research Lawyer with the Towards Truth Project).

FORBES SOCIETY LECTURES AND PRESENTATIONS

Lectures and legal history tutorials convened by the Forbes Society are generally open to the public, without charge. The Forbes Society's annual programme of legal history tutorials has, since its inception in 2013, included presentations by senior judges, academics, members of the Bar and Court staff.

If you have any queries about attending or presenting, please advise the Treasurer (Carol Webster SC) or the Secretary of the Society (Simon Chapple SC) at secretariat@forbessociety.org.au.

THE ANNUAL FORBES LECTURE: The Forbes Society, and the annual Forbes Lecture sponsored by the Society, are named for Francis Forbes (1784-1841), the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of NSW, 1824-1837. He was knighted in 1837.

On 31 July 2024, Daniel Yazdani, barrister of 13th Floor St James Hall, delivered the 2024 Forbes Lecture titled 'Francis Forbes and the Parable of the Gown and Wig: A History of Legal Dress in NSW' chaired by Dr Simon Chapple SC (Secretary of the Forbes Society).

The 2025 Forbes Lecture was given on 22 July 2025 by Professor Kathy Bowrey of the Faculty of Law UNSW, in Banco Court, titled "The Diva, her Lover and the Recording Company scheme to "get Melba": Introducing Dame Nellie Melba (1861-1931), the business woman," chaired by Professor Mark Lunney (Junior Vice President)

JH PLUNKETT LECTURES: The Annual JH Plunkett Lecture honours the memory of one of the State's pivotal Attorneys General. John Hubert Plunkett (1802-1869) arrived in NSW, from Ireland, in 1832. For more than 30 years thereafter he made a major contribution to colonial law and society, serving, inter alia, as Solicitor General and Attorney General. In 1835 he published *The Australian Magistrate*, the first Australian legal practice book. He was the first Australian lawyer to be granted a commission as Queen's Counsel. He led Roger Therry, another Irish-born barrister, in the conduct of the Myall Creek Murder trials.

The 13th Annual Plunkett Lecture 'Liberty not Licence: The law's response to the challenges of ethno-religious sectarianism in nineteenth and early twentieth century Australia' was delivered on 10 September 2024 by Dr Jeff Kildea, and chaired by The Hon. Michael Daley MP, Attorney General of NSW.

The NSW Solicitor General, Michael Sexton SC delivered the 14th Annual Plunkett Lecture titled 'The Model of a Modern Solicitor General' on 23 October 2025, chaired by Carol Webster SC (Treasurer of the Forbes Society).

THE FORBES FUND: One of the Society's objects is to encourage and promote research into Australian legal history and it maintains for that purpose the Francis Forbes Fund, to which donations may be made. Donations to the Forbes Fund (in the sum of \$2.00 or more) are tax deductible. As well as specific projects each year, the Society supports an annual Essay prize for the best paper presented at the ANZLHS Conference, judged by a panel appointed by the Editor of law & history. Grants have included:

(2025 grants): *Australian National University* Dr Paula Byrne's book with ANU Press, "Law in the New Democracy", which has as its subject the criminal courts of the 1850s;
University of Melbourne Dr Lucinda O'Brien, 'Evolution of Australian bankruptcy law from the mid-1800s';

Australian National University Dr Laura L. Dawes, ‘Slip! Slop! Sue! A history of tax litigation and skin cancer activism’;

University of New England Ben Hingley, ‘Martial law in the pre-Federation colonies of New South Wales, Victoria and Van Diemen’s Land’;

University of Southern Queensland Dr Rhett Martin, ‘Historical review of the circumstances of the 1891 conviction and imprisonment of 10 striking shearers for conspiracy.’

(2024 grants): *University of Sydney Law School* Inma Conde, ‘A historical interpretation of Article 7(1) of the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods’; *University of Sydney Law School* Dr Jeffrey Gordon, ‘Free speech moments in Australian legal history’; *UNSW Law & Justice* Dr Henry Kha, ‘Ne Temere and the Marriage Law of New South Wales: Religious Sectarianism in the 1920s’.

We welcome all further donations to enable us to support such worthy projects – provision for donations is made on the membership form.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE FORBES SOCIETY: Membership of the Forbes Society is open to everybody. A [2026-27 membership form](#) can be downloaded from the Society’s website forbessociety.org.au or by scanning this QR code. Benefits of membership include timely notification of legal history events via updates emailed to members from time to time.



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