

Celebrating Samuel Griffith **Introduction by Justice Peter Applegarth AM**

Chief Justice, other distinguished speakers, friends and colleagues.

Sunday just gone marked the 100th anniversary of the passing of Samuel Griffith.

On Griffith's retirement from the High Court in 1919 the Queensland Premier, T J Ryan, said that Griffith was:

"a great statesman, a great lawyer, a great judge and a great scholar; but he was a man of unimpeachable integrity, of single-minded purpose and burning patriotism. **No one could have believed more firmly than he did in the gospel of hard work or have made it more completely a guiding principle of his life. Certainly no man ever laboured more strenuously or more self-sacrificingly for the good of the people**".

The products of Griffith's labours surround us. This nation's Constitution; the Griffith Criminal Code that applies, largely unaltered 120 years later, in different states and territories, in Papua-New Guinea and in other places; and the general law that Griffith made as a judge: Chief Justice of this Court and then first Chief Justice of Australia.

A long list of enduring achievements to celebrate.

This was to be the year for a major exhibition here in our library, and a series of public lectures, about Griffith. They are delayed, not cancelled. Tonight we are going to race through five aspects of Griffith's life. Sadly, each of our distinguished speakers is confined to about 10 minutes, to be followed by a panel discussion. Each topic warrants a whole day seminar.

When we consider Griffith's combined qualities as a scholar, a lawyer, a politician, a statesman, and a jurist, we face the fact that each century must produce only a few individuals of that exceptional stature.

We should reflect too on the number of centuries the lands on which we gather have been occupied by their traditional owners. Over those millennia, there must have been many men and women of Griffith's intelligence, industry, learning and leadership.

Our first speaker, Dr Raymond Evans, has written about that ancient history and about modern Australian history. Raymond has written about life in Queensland in

Griffith's time. With other historians he has documented Australia's Federation story. Raymond Evans shares with Samuel Griffith the experience of being a migrant from Wales. Samuel Griffith arrived in Australia as a boy in 1853. Raymond Evans arrived in Australia as a boy in 1949. They were both born in Merthyr Tydfil. There can be no historian better qualified to speak about Griffith's early life and the Welsh immigrant experience.

Chief Justice Katherine Holmes is a scholar and jurist who needs no introduction. We are delighted and privileged that the Chief Justice could contribute to this seminar by speaking about a few aspects of Griffith's complex career as a politician.

John McKenna QC is a scholar, a leader of the Bar and an accomplished historian. John has written about Griffith's career as a barrister and is currently undertaking broader research into the key legal figures and issues of colonial Queensland for a new *Companion to Queensland Law*. A link to his outstanding paper titled "The Griffith Opinion Books" is on the Library's webpage for this event.

Professor Carolyn Evans is Vice Chancellor and President of Griffith University. She was awarded a doctorate from Oxford where she studied as a Rhodes Scholar and later taught. She works in the areas of law, religion and human rights. As a dynamic Vice Chancellor, Professor Evans is a very busy person at any time. The demands on her at this time are enormous. So we are honoured that Professor Evans is able to speak about Griffith's role in drafting the Constitution.

Professor Joseph is an expert on constitutional law and international human rights law. She started at Griffith Law School in 2020 after 25 years at Monash University, including 15 years leading its Castan Centre for Human Rights Law. Professor Joseph will speak about The Griffith Court.