



Narratives of women in law: Then and now

Tuesday 19 September, 3–5 pm

Speakers

Professor Rosemary Auchmuty

University of Reading

Professor Margaret Thornton

ANU College of Law

Dr Heather Roberts

ANU College of Law

Chair

Emeritus Professor Michael Coper

ANU College of Law

Location

Law Theatre

ANU College of Law, 5 Fellows Road,
The Australian National University, Canberra

Talk is followed by light refreshments

Registration required

W [eventbrite.com.au/e/narratives-of-women-in-law-then-and-now-tickets-36813942493](https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/narratives-of-women-in-law-then-and-now-tickets-36813942493)

E events.law@anu.edu.au

T 02 6125 0454

Upcoming ANU Law events:
law.anu.edu.au/news-and-events/upcoming-events

Presented by

Centre for International
& Public Law
ANU College of
Law



Why does feminist legal biography matter?

This sounds like an obvious question with an obvious answer – it matters in the same way that feminist legal history matters, because women and gender concerns have been largely left out of writing about the past, and we need to reclaim them – but it is different in some ways, and it's these I would like to address. First, feminist legal history is not just telling the stories of women; there can be feminist legal biographies of men, and it is interesting to consider the differences between these and 'traditional' legal biographies. Second, we have a tendency to look for heroines in the women we write about – otherwise, why would we write about them? – and this will have consequences for the 'truth' of what we tell. Third, there is a cadre of women who have already been set up in traditional history as heroines, and we need not only to interrogate their presentation and expose the myths and re-interpretations that have made their lives acceptable to traditional history, as well as to look for and present the 'reality', but also to find and write about women who have never been heroines and are not likely to be instated as heroines, but who are nevertheless interesting, and even important, to those of us who want to explore our heritage.

Professor Rosemary Auchmuty graduated with a BA and PhD in history from the ANU some decades ago and has lived in London since 1978. She is currently Professor of Law at the University of Reading and does feminist legal scholarship of many kinds, including legal history. She is co-coordinator of the Women's Legal Landmarks project, set up to celebrate the centenary of women's admission to the legal profession in the UK and Ireland in 1919,



a project that involves 100 scholars each contributing a landmark they have chosen to a volume to be published by Hart and an open-access website.

Edith Haynes: Non-person or non-citizen?

This presentation focuses on the case of Edith Haynes who was admitted to articles but denied permission to sit her intermediate examination by the Supreme Court of WA in 1904. She was deemed not be a 'person' for the purposes of admission, even though all (white) women had by then been enfranchised. The presentation imagines how the judges of the very new Australian High Court (1903) might have determined an appeal.

Margaret Thornton (FASSA; FAAL) is Professor of Law at the ANU. She has published extensively on issues relating to women and the law, including the only book-length study on women and the legal profession in Australia: *Dissonance and Distrust* (OUP, 1996; Chinese trans, Law Press, 2001).

Speaking to history: Women in the ceremonial archive

On 30 January 2017 Susan Kiefel was sworn-in as Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, a landmark moment for women in the law in Australia. For the first time in Australian legal history, her swearing-in ceremony was also broadcast live on Australian television. This presentation reflects on this recent and historic swearing-in to explore the ways in which these ceremonies are used to (re)tell the stories of women in the law, and why these stories matter.

Dr Heather Roberts is a Senior Lecturer at the ANU College of Law, and like Professor Auchmuty obtained her undergraduate and doctoral degrees from the ANU. Researching at the intersections of law, biography, history and gender studies, she is a leading and pioneer scholar on Australian judicial swearing-in ceremonies, commenting on their insights and significance on ABC News 24 and on ABC Radio National's Law Report.