

**SPECIAL EDITION
LEGAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE – GRADUAL EVOLUTION
OR PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIUM?**

FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I present the latest volume of the *Canterbury Law Review*. This special edition arises out of the Australian and New Zealand Law and History Society Annual Conference held at the University of Canterbury in 2017. The theme is captured in the title of this special edition. It drew on evolutionary theory about how species form and questioned whether changes in the law and in the effects of particular laws on society occur through a gradual process of incremental change or through periods of relative stasis with intervening major shifts.

The volume is comprised of seven articles. Six articles stem from the aforementioned conference. The first is an overview of the development of Māori land policy during the period between the Native Land Act 1909 and the Māori Affairs Act 1953, focusing on the Māori land development policies of Sir Āpirana Ngata. The second article looks at women who murdered their husbands by poisoning in 19th-century colonial Australia and how they were treated within the criminal justice system of the time. The third examines the history of the New Zealand District Court, from its creation in 1858 until its closure in 1909, a period in court history that seems to have been somewhat overlooked by legal writers until now. The fourth investigates the commoditisation of every aspect of life in colonial Sydney. The fifth article examines Theodosius I's edict in 380 CE and the way he used the law to dictate the private lives of individuals to promote social unity and avoid dissention. Last, but certainly not least, the sixth article investigates the concerns about trial by media in 19th century Australia to determine whether juries in those times could be trusted to make decisions on the evidence before them at trial.

The seventh article is the winning essay from the *Canterbury Law Review's* essay competition by Robert Brew, an honours student in his fourth year at the University of Canterbury.

To conclude, there is a book review of *Magna Carta in New Zealand: History, Politics and Law in Aotearoa* (S Walker and C Jones (eds)), which is a collection of works that deal with the legal, political and historical significance of Magna Carta in Aotearoa New Zealand. It has earned an excellent review by Richard Boast and is described by him as an “outstanding achievement” and “a richly rewarding experience for those who choose to read it”.

All articles went through a rigorous blind peer-review process. I wish to thank the reviewers for their evaluations and useful comments which have been extremely helpful to our authors.

Finally, thank you to all our contributors and subscribers to the Canterbury Law Review. I hope you enjoy this much anticipated and very interesting special edition.

Dr Toni Collins
Guest Editor
Canterbury Law Review