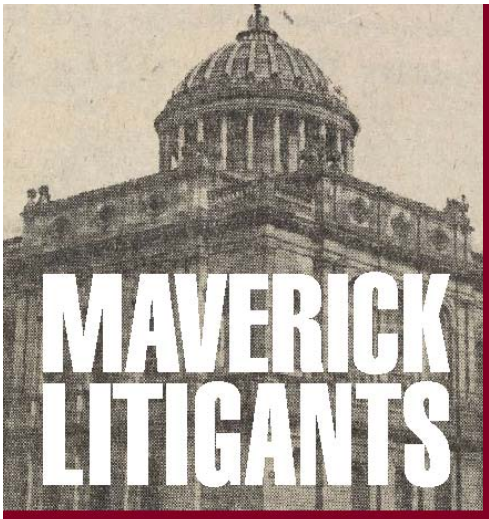

Australia cherishes its eccentrics, dissenters, rascals, ratbags, cranks and agitators. There are numerous books celebrating that fact. To explain this phenomenon authors and commentators draw variously on Australia's convict past, the forced emigration of political dissenters such as the Chartists, the isolation from Europe, the early privations of "life in the bush" and even the presence of unique fauna and flora. Within this odd mix, egalitarian values that eschew a class system are celebrated.

However, in the legal sphere, the environment is more restrained. It is an arena where the form of documentation, time limits, case law, wigs and gowns and the skills and courtesies of the professional advocate that make the system work, dominate. It is less tolerant of the litigant-in-person. It is as if they are an interloper. Those individuals who persist in self-litigating and who try the patience of those administering the system are eventually declared by the court to be "vexatious litigants" and are banned from further litigating.

Maverick Litigants traces the evolution of this harsh legal sanction since its introduction into Australia in 1930. This book also explores the legal theory behind the sanction and explains recent moves to modernise it. Most importantly, the book brings to life the previously untold stories of six of Australia's vexatious litigants and argues that they can more properly be described as people of ideas, as reformers and activists seeking to advance those ideas, causes and themselves through the legal system. In short, they are maverick litigants.

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