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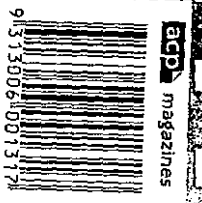
MOST INFLUENTIAL AUSTRALIANS



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GEORGE ROBERTSON
Publisher and bookseller

When George Robertson and his partner David Angus moved their Sydney bookselling business into larger premises in Castlereagh Street in 1890, Robertson insisted that customers should be encouraged to browse at their leisure. Five years later, when he added a lending library, the firm was regularly publishing books under its own imprint. A&R was crucial to the development of a national literary culture. Though Robertson initially bought into Angus' business, the largely self-educated Scot lost his partner to ill health in 1899 and dominated the business for the next 30 years. Robertson was determined to publish new Australian writers. The first book to bear the A&R imprint appeared in 1888 but the publishing house got a huge kick in 1895 with "Banjo" Paterson's "The Man from Snowy River" collection, which sold a prodigious 7000 copies. Robertson, who ran the publishing department almost single-handedly, published many of Australia's best-known writers including Henry Lawson, Mary Gilmore and Norman Lindsay, as well as authoritative works of Australian history, biography and military exploits.

MICHAEL KIRBY
High Court judge

Michael Kirby, optimist and internationalist, was appointed to the High Court in 1996 on the turn of the electoral tide. A passionate social and legal reformer, in the following decade he clocked up the highest rate of dissent of any judge in the history of the court. But if his ideological predecessor Lionel Murphy was the legal equivalent of a bull in a china shop, as legal historian Wayne Morgan has written, Kirby's proddings towards legal change have been much more subtle. He was never more subtle, and perhaps most influential, than in his discreet inclusion of his long-time male partner's name in the 1999 edition of *Who's Who of Australia*. Julie McCrossin says: "It rendered tolerable what was so recently a matter for shame." But it also left outflyer Kirby even more exposed. In 2002, one of his best-known critics, Liberal senator Bill Heffernan, used parliamentary privilege to accuse him of trawling for rent boys. The claim was swiftly discredited, and the Christian grace with which Kirby, a practising Anglican, accepted Heffernan's apology made a deep impression on a politically numbed and cynical public.



BEN LEXCEN
Yacht designer

"The day of her maiden voyage was a major occasion. The place was packed, and Benny was floating somewhere between the dock and seventh heaven ... Here was this huge, good-natured, slightly chaotic man with his arms often spread wide before his new creation, as if conducting a Vivaldi concerto. In his considered view, Australia II made all other boats seem ugly." - John Bertrand, skipper of Australia II, the first challenger to win the America's Cup in 132 years.

Aian Bond, who bankrolled the challenge for sailing's ultimate trophy, had been convinced that he needed a superior boat to win and he asked Ben Lexcen to do the job. "I recognised he had something," said Bond. Lexcen (born Bob Miller) was a natural genius, said Peter van Oossanen, the director of the Netherlands Ship Model Basin where Australia II's design was tested. He left school at 14, built his first boat at 16, and became a sailmaker and yacht designer specialising in 18-foot skiffs, which he revolutionised. He constantly experimented with keels, rigs and concepts from aircraft design. "Good ideas are all around us," he often said.

OF A RHINO. BUT NOT ITS SKIN.

