

Annual

Harry Evans

Lecture

To be delivered by
Dr Rosemary Laing

Richard Chaffey Baker and the shaping of the Australian Senate

Friday, 19 October 2018

12.15pm – 1.15pm

Theatre, Parliament House, Canberra



Unlike his fellow South Australian office-holders, Charles Cameron Kingston and Sir Frederick Holder, Sir Richard Chaffey Baker—Chair of Committees at the 1897–98 Constitutional Convention and first President of the Senate—was not chosen to leave his mark on the roll call of Canberra suburbs but he has left an indelible mark on the Senate as it has developed since the second half of the twentieth century. Baker's contribution to the making of the Australian Constitution, including his passionate advocacy for a federal system, and his stewardship of the Senate through its first crucial years set the Senate up for the scrutiny and accountability functions it would later perform so assertively. Possibly more than any other person at the Convention, including EG Blackmore who was to continue as his Clerk in the new jurisdiction, Baker "got" what the Senate was for and embraced its potential. Little wonder he was greatly admired by the late Harry Evans.



But who was Sir Richard Chaffey Baker, KCMG? In this lecture, former Clerk of the Senate, **Dr Rosemary Laing**, examines the influences that made Baker and asks why we have heard so little about him in the context of the federation story and its aftermath, apart, perhaps, from the infamous duel challenge by Kingston in 1892. She also touches on the long relationship between Baker and Blackmore. Was it one of the great partnerships in the building of a national institution, or something rather more problematic?

The Harry Evans Lecture commemorates the service to the Senate of the longest serving Clerk of the Senate, Harry Evans. This annual lecture focuses on matters championed by Mr Evans during his tenure as Clerk including the importance of the Senate as an institution, the rights of individual senators and the value of parliamentary democracy.

Admission free – bookings not required

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