

A Social History of Company Law

Great Britain and the Australian Colonies 1854–1920

Rob McQueen, Griffith University, Australia



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The history of incorporations legislation and its administration is intimately tied to changes in social beliefs in respect to the role and purpose of the corporation. By studying the evolution of the corporate form in Britain and a number of its colonial possessions, the book illuminates debates on key concepts including the meanings of *laissez faire*, freedom of commerce, the notion of corporate responsibility and the role of the state in the regulation of business. In doing so, *A Social History of Company Law* advances our understanding of the shape, effectiveness and deficiencies of modern regulatory regimes, and will be of much interest to a wide circle of scholars.

'McQueen's timely book fills a gap in the literature by covering a period that was not studied comprehensively in recent decades. Its social history approach, particularly apt in the current period of corporate governance crisis, places company law in a thicker context. The book extends beyond Britain into its Empire and thus should interest a wider circle of scholars.'

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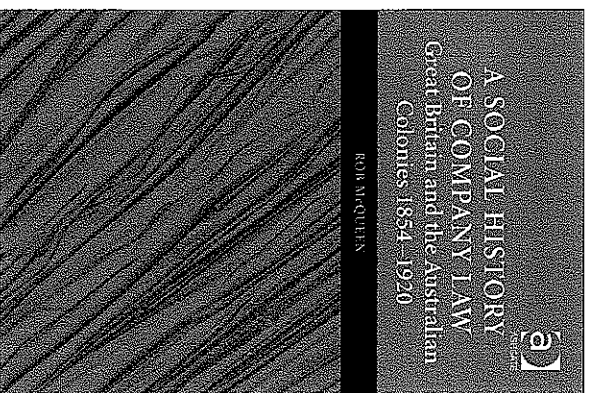
'This is a carefully argued and richly detailed piece of corporate law and legal history scholarship which should become a standard reference. It underlines the vital importance of understanding history for anyone who wishes to be truly engaged in current debates about the regulation, governance and social responsibility of corporations.'

Stephen Bottomley, ANU College of Law, Australia

'The book is clear and accessible, and will be of interest to students and scholars in Law and History, and to those concerned with the interplay between law and society.'

David Sugarman, University of Lancaster, UK

Contents: Introduction; Social attitudes to company law: 1720–1855; Christian Socialism and the debate on limited liability; The reasons for the enactment of, and the form taken by; English limited liability legislation, 1855–1856; The first 15 years of limited liability company legislation in England 1855–1870; The 1870s and early 1880s: the growing acceptability of limited liability incorporation; The consolidation of company law 1886–1914; Limited liability company legislation in the colonies: the Australian experience 1864–1920; Conclusions; Appendix; Bibliography; Index.



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