Interview with Michael Kirby, former High Court Judge, and AJ Brown, Griffith University Professor and author, about his unauthorised biography, Michael Kirby: Paradoxes and Principles, written by Brown.

Kirby says the book written about him by Brown is tough but fair. Brown says Kirby's life is a jumble of paradoxes, as are most peoples, and that he has a unique power for communication. Brown says he had a clear image of Kirby as a media performer when he was on the Australian and ACT Law Reform Commissions, and that when he met him he found this image hard to reconcile with the conservationist aspects of Kirby's personality. Kirby says Australia's strong and stable Government and judiciary have helped make Australia the fair and just society it is.

Malcolm Turnbull launched the book yesterday, and Kirby says Turnbull certainly does not agree with his monarchist views. Kirby says the Australia needs a Bill of Rights as Parliament has not always been capable of properly protecting the rights of political dissidents, Indigenous peoples and gays. Brown says in recent years Kirby's personal experiences has reflected his legal concerns. Sloan mentions the 'disgraceful attack' by Senator Bill Heffernan that turned into a screaming match, and Kirby says it was a shocking incident in the relationship between the High Court and Parliament. Brown says the lesson from that was that there will always be elected to Parliament who will complain about High Court judges, and what was concerning was that there were people who knew that some of the documents that formed the basis of Heffernan's accusations were false and yet they did not speak up at the time.

Brown says Kirby has brought into sharp relief the questions that have confronted society in recent years. Kirby says the whole western approach to drug law is under question in South America as being unsustainable, and that the NT Intervention is a fundamentally racist policy. He does not want to discuss the personal life of Julia Gillard, Australian Prime Minister, despite her comments about the values of family life. Kirby says getting into politics would have meant having to lie about being gay. Brown says Kirby took his role as a sole liberal voice on the High Court as a serious responsibility.

Interviewee
AJ Brown, Griffith University Professor and author

Interviewee
Michael Kirby, former High Court Judge

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