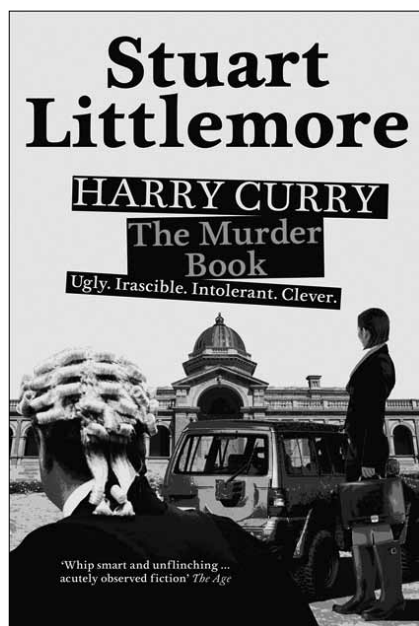


## Harry Curry: The Murder Book

By Stuart Littlemore QC | HarperCollins | 2012



*Harry Curry, The Murder Book* (Harper Collins, 2012) is the second book of short stories in the Harry Curry series written by Stuart Littlemore QC.

*Harry Curry, Counsel of Choice*, was published last year. It's funny and well written, and the hugely enjoyable *The Murder Book* is better still.

As with *Counsel of Choice*, *The Murder Book* contains a series of five stories featuring criminal barrister Harry Curry, his girlfriend (and barrister) Arabella Engineer, and loyal instructing solicitor David Surrey. Harry is called upon to defend a highly co-operative serial killer, an ex-tennis professional charged with killing a child in a 'shaken-baby' case, and a young man from a wealthy family who has killed (perhaps) a man who molested him as a young boy. What links these and the other stories is the friendship between Curry and his unflappable instructing solicitor, but most of all his love affair with his beautiful and brilliant colleague.

Possibly what is most important in a book of this type is the likeability of the central character. Writing a second series of stories has enabled Littlemore to develop his characters further, and *The Murder Book* is stronger for it.

Not all lawyers, and certainly not all members of the New South Wales Bar will like Harry Curry. If you were to come across him, you would be subjected to his 'Dry Cleaner Test'. If you look like the sort of person that might own a small chain of dry cleaning stores, perhaps four or five – that is, if you look like a 'self satisfied petty bourgeois' – it would be unlikely that Harry would be polite to you. How many lawyers would fail the 'dry cleaner' test (or the dry cleaners' wives test) is unknown, but both Bob Hawke and John Howard did in Harry's view. And if he didn't pick you as the proprietor of dry cleaner stores, he's just as likely to view you, should you attend the bench and bar dinner, as the 'arriviste offspring of country publicans and suburban solicitors'. And heaven help any barrister that might come across Harry should they admit to participation in the Great Bar Boat Race.

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Whether barristers and other lawyers would like Harry Curry is not the point though. These stories are written for a wider audience, and I suspect that wider audience would like Harry rather a lot. He might

see himself as a '[b]ig ugly bloke in a suit and tie', but there's more to Harry than that. For a start, he's clever. Most likely his intelligence comes from his mother, who not only read Faulkner and Patrick White, but understood them. His father, on the other hand, was a tax silk, although a rather pleasant one.

Harry's also an exceptional barrister. He specialised in crime, perhaps largely because he generally likes jurors considerably more than most judges. And there are no pleadings in crime, no 'largely pointless conflicts over arcane interlocutory processes'. Not many counsel could achieve a murder acquittal for a client who admitted to shooting their landlord, at close range, no less than nine times. Harry can be very persuasive with a jury. When he's on form, not even the best that the Crown has, not even its 'tall, rat faced misanthrope'<sup>1</sup>, is a match for him.

He's also a romantic. Other than the criminal trial theme, there are two things that link the five stories together, and which give the book the feel of a novel. The first is Harry's fluctuating relationship with Arabella, which runs as a common

thread through each trial. She's a strong character, and a great foil for Harry. Then there's Harry's other great love. That of the bush, and his home 'outside the hamlet of Burragate', a small town near the

Victorian border. While he might have a fondness for *girolles* and Burgundian wine, this is the modest sanctuary Harry retreats to, whether in triumph or when he simply wants solace. It's here, even when a storm has deprived him of companionship and the usual comforts, that Harry can find peace:

Back on the verandah, Harry pulled a leech off his ankle and squashed it with a loose river stone from the

garden. He hung up his wet-weather gear and went inside to try the television, but the signal wasn't penetrating the downpour. Nor would the radio work. He put on his Magic Flute CD and looked for a suitable book to read, but could find nothing, so he lay on the sofa and listened to the Queen of the Night competing with the wind and the sound of the rain on his tin roof. The quince tree was banging its branches against the guttering.

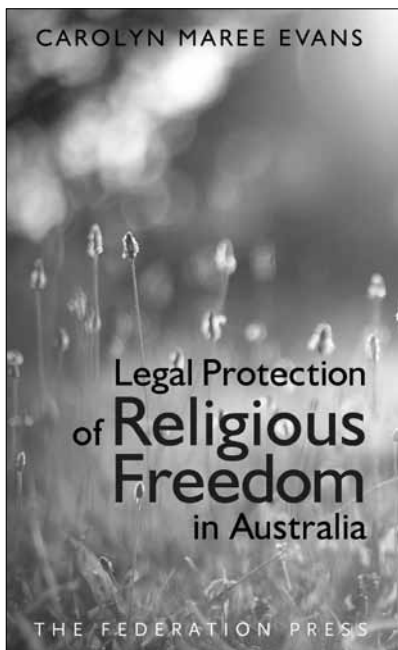
Harry Curry is a great character, and Littlemore's fiction deserves a wide audience. His next series of stories – *Harry Curry, Rats and Mice* – will be published in 2013.

**Reviewed by Richard Beasley SC**

#### Endnotes

1. The usual disclaimer about any resemblance to persons living or dead being purely coincidental does not appear to have been printed in *The Murder Book*, but no doubt applies.

## Legal Protection of Religious Freedom in Australia



By Carolyn Maree Evans | Federation Press | 2012

Ms Evans book is therefore very important and it is important for the following reasons: the topic is obviously very topical; it contains recent case law, legislation and international issues; it is clearly written for lawyers with detailed attention to case law and legislation yet it is easy to read and written in a style that non lawyers would still find interesting; and it deals with a wide range of issues associated with the legal protection of religious freedom in Australia.

Some of the issues she deals with are: how the importance of religions has changed in Australia over the years; the relevance of International law to this topic generally and to case law in Australia; how the Constitution deals with the protection of religious freedom; specific case law and legislation (including cases dealing with the running of particular religious schools in certain communities, building religious temples and churches, teachers not getting employment in religious schools because of

their sexual orientation, and cases dealing with Jehovah Witnesses who refuse blood transfusions); how the anti discrimination laws deal with religious freedom; religious vilification laws and cases and how Australian courts deal with the concept of religious freedom eg can she wear her burqa or niqab when giving evidence in an Australian court?

Ms Evans writes at pages 21-22 that 'Demographic trends indicate that Australia is likely to become more religiously diverse over the next two decades....These trends will open up new possibilities for greater understanding and cultural richness, but will also require rethinking of some of the traditional relationships between the state, the legal system and religious groups....this book will hopefully increase understanding of some of the key debates around law and religion currently taking place in Australia.'

I found this book very topical and very interesting.

**Reviewed by Caroline Dobraszczyk**

I finished reading this book on the day NSW Police were gearing up to increase their patrol of the streets of Sydney's CBD, over the weekend, as a result of that horrific demonstration that none of us will forget, on a sunny Saturday afternoon. I, too, had my afternoon rudely interrupted by that demonstration – I was lunching and shopping – a demonstration in the name of religion.