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978-0-521-77353-9 - Obligated to be Difficult: Nugget Coombs' Legacy in Indigenous Affairs

Tim Rowse

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Obligated to be Difficult

Since the 1967 constitutional referendum, Australian governments have moved towards policies of indigenous self-determination. *Obligated to be Difficult* presents the central issue of self-determination as seen by Dr H.C. Coombs, the most important policy-maker since the referendum: through what political mechanisms will indigenous Australians find their own voice? Coombs was singularly influential within government in the years 1967 to 1976, and he remained a tireless critic and policy advocate from 1977 to 1996. Rowse's narrative of his work, drawing on many unpublished sources, illuminates the interplay of government policy with indigenous practice. This book is both an account of government policies and a biographical slice of an outstanding Australian. In attempting a critical celebration of Coombs' vision and methods, it invites informed reflection on the issues of land rights, sovereignty and reconciliation in these conservative, and highly anxious, times.

TIM ROWSE is a well-known writer on Australian politics and indigenous affairs. He is the author of six books, including *After Mabo* (1993) and *White Flour, White Power: From Rations to Citizenship in Central Australia* (Cambridge University Press 1998). He is currently a research fellow with the Department of Government and Public Administration at the University of Sydney, and is working on a longer account of Coombs' career.

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