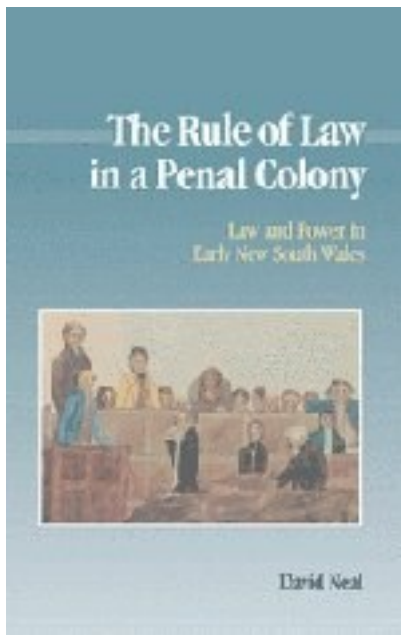


The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony



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Ironically, the first civil case to be heard in Australia occurred at the behest of two convicts under sentence. Of course, convicts had first-hand experience of criminal law, but all the settlers were part of a culture which emphasised the rule of law as the guarantee of its fundamental political value, British liberty. This book, written by a lawyer and unique for its perspective based in both legal and social history, illuminates the important role played by the concept of the rule of law in the transformation of New South Wales from a penal colony to a free society. Dr Neal lucidly outlines the interaction between law and politics in early New South Wales and shows that because there were no official political structures, the courts served as a de facto parliament and a means of political expression.

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