

## **Kevin Gill**

Former Public Servant

Reading this history reminds me of the exciting times of being a mid-level bureaucrat when Whitlam came to power. There were so many interesting thinkers in the cabinet: a really rich field of talent and thought.

The Liberals had been in since 1949. Then, after a close run in the 1969 election, Whitlam came in with "It's time" in late 1972 when Murphy was appointed Attorney General. All the women were stenographers and typists and all the managers and decision makers were men. The new government set about changing that. New young Public Servants were very keen to be part of the changes and older Public Servants, who were loyal to the old regime and the relative places of men and women in society, resisted change. A woman, recruited from Sydney as a Librarian, moved to Canberra with her family. I put her up for a housing allowance commensurate with her new position. My boss objected; in 1972 only men were bread winners. However, the problem was that *she* was the bread winner; her husband was a student and not working.

Murphy talked about a different approach, what he described as natural justice, which resulted in initiatives like Legal Aid, the new Family Court with no fault divorce and of course the Civil Celebrant Program.

The text (of A Celebrant's Notebook) reads well with Anna's light touch and flowing language conversational style. I really liked the stories and they gave me an odd teary eye every now and then. It's not like a textbook or TO DO book but, subtly, it is of course. I think it is very, as they say, approachable. I hope Anna has great success with it. I would like to purchase a copy for my friend, a neighbour Bill Cole who was director of my dad's and two brothers' funerals. I think he and his wife will find Anna's work of great interest.

*Kevin commenced at the Public Service Board in Feb 1966 (a week before decimal currency was introduced) then was called up for service in Vietnam in October '67, returning in late '69 to the public service. He worked for the Whitlam government in the Attorney General's Department under Lionel Murphy, then the Community Relations Office under Al Grassby and the first Human Rights Commission under Dame Roma Mitchell.*