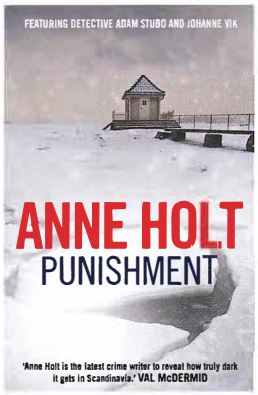
books



PUNISHMENT

BY ANNE HOLT

REVIEW BY JUSTIN MOSES

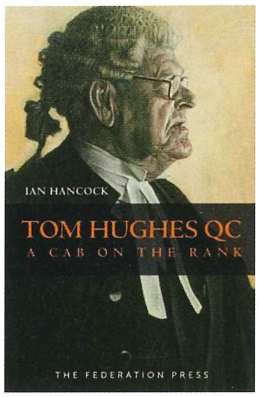
Having been a police officer, lawyer and, most impressively, Norway's Minister for Justice for two years, Anne Holt is admirably qualified to open a window to the dark forces that motivate people to do evil.

Punishment is a tightly-woven thriller in which three equally intriguing sub-plots ultimately come together in a thoroughly satisfying finish. Finding a truly heartless killer, dealing with the distraction of an ineffectual copycat, and delivering redemption to an innocent man wrongly imprisoned are the key themes of *Punishment*. The shifting of focus between these themes, deepening the intrigue without complicating the narrative, is something that Holt times to perfection.

The novel is listed as one of Holt's Vik/Stubo series, a reference to the book's main characters. This is clearly the first of the series chronologically, because it features the meeting and the brand new relationship dynamics of these two appealing characters. Appealing because of their normality, their believability, and the personal foibles that make a refreshing change from many thrillers in which the protagonist borders on being superhuman.

The early days of what will clearly become a fruitful collaboration between the deeply experienced Police Superintendent Adam Stubo and the highly intelligent but somewhat introverted legal academic Johanne Vik, are characterised by a tantalising awkwardness in defining the personal and professional boundaries of their relationship. But their complementary skills and common passion for justice emerge to form the foundation of their alliance.

The translation from Norwegian is skilful, with only one or two jarring examples of words or expressions for which the closest English equivalent seems a crude substitute for what is surely a more nuanced Norwegian version. It's a minor distraction, however, in the context of another excellent contribution to the impressively building catalogue of Scandinavian crime fiction. ■



TOM HUGHES QC A CAB ON THE RANK

BY IAN HANCOCK

REVIEW BY KATE ALLMAN

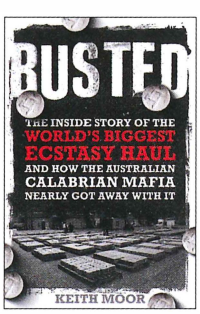
Crime, defamation, constitutional issues, commercial litigation, inquiries – for 60 years Tom Hughes was there, a big man with a big capacity for the big cases. For him, the "namby-pamby school of advocacy" was abhorrent. Hughes' mantra was to play hard, learn from mistakes and do better.

Hughes appeared in many significant cases and represented a multitude of high-profile individuals throughout his career. He had a dominating presence in court; a theatrical and intimidating style backed by a captivating use of language. He really was a cab on the rank, and shares plenty of thoughts on his famous and infamous clients. Some of them were unreasonably ungrateful.

Hughes, a scion of a notable Sydney family, was one of Australia's top barristers for more than three decades, and has been a wartime pilot, politician, federal minister, a grazier and a racehorse owner. To mention his name to Australians who were in their 20s in 1970, invariably evokes memories of the day when the Commonwealth Attorney-General, armed with a cricket bat, confronted anti-conscription and anti-Vietnam protesters outside his Sydney home. Anyone who saw him in the family gathering at Government House on 15 September 2015 would have learned or been reminded that he is the father-in-law of Australia's 29th Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull. Australians of a literary or artistic bent would be aware that he was the older brother of the late Robert Hughes, the internationally famous author and art critic.

After six decades at the Bar, Hughes secured a better than the 60 per cent success rate, he modestly claims, and was considered a role model for a particular kind of advocacy. He has attained almost legendary status as being perhaps the last of his kind. The case for reading his biography is substantial on these grounds alone, and reinforced because Hughes' story comprises many other fascinating narratives. ■

OUT NOW

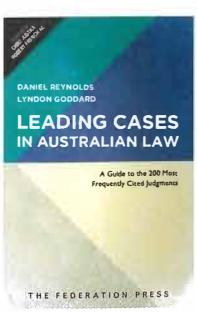


Penguin Random House

BUSTED

BY KEITH MOOR

From the editor of the Melbourne *Herald Sun* investigative unit comes this account of the world's biggest ecstasy haul. Walkely award-winning journalist Keith Moore tells the fascinating inside story of how Melbourne customs officials intercepted 15 million ecstasy tablets and how the Australian Calabrian mafia nearly got away with it.



Federation Press

LEADING CASES IN AUSTRALIAN LAW

BY DANIEL REYNOLDS AND LYNDON GODDARD

This is an extensive go-to guide to the 200 most frequently cited judgments in Australian law. Each case note contains an outline of the facts, issues and decision, an extract of the most frequently-cited portions of the judgment, commentary incorporating later decisions on the topic, and cross-references to the leading texts on the legal area of the case.