**Canberra Times Colin Hughes Obituary**

With the death of Emeritus Professor Colin Hughes, aged 87 at Peregian Springs Queensland on 30 June 2017, the political science profession lost one of its most distinguished members and Australia one of its most exemplary citizens.

Colin Anfield Hughes was born on 4 May 1930 in Dunmore Town in the Bahamas. His father John, a former school teacher, was a senior British civil service commissioner and a ‘power behind the throne’ when the former King Edward VIII was Governor of the Bahamas during WW II.

Colin was educated in Nassau and at Anacostia High School in Washington DC. He briefly enrolled at George Washington University but transferred to Columbia University in New York City. He gained a Bachelor of Arts in 1949 and graduated with a Master of Arts in Public Law and Government in 1950.

He completed a Doctor of Philosophy at the London School of Economics on West Indian constitutional politics (later published as *Race and Politics in the Bahamas)* but also passed the Bar Examinations in the same cohort as Margaret Hilda (later Baroness) Thatcher in late 1953.

He was admitted to Gray’s Inn the next year. Lacking the private income to survive at the English Bar, he returned to Nassau. In San Francisco in 1954 he married an Australian, Gwen Olive Glover. Her death in 2015 devastated him.

Hughes became a partner in the law firm McKinney, Bancroft and Hughes, which is now one of the Bahamas’ most prominent legal firms. He did the legal work for what was the first marine park in the world—the Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park. He moved to Queensland University in 1956 to become a lecturer in Political Science; then returned to the law in Nassau in 1959.

Bahamian politics were volatile in the 1950s and 1960s as an indigenous nationalist movement confronted the corrupt influence of the white colonialist ‘Bay Street Boys’. Colin Hughes abhorred racism, held progressive political views and took briefs which antagonised elements of the elite. On one occasion, the Riot Squad was put on alert to protect him and the presiding magistrate in a fraught electoral law case.

In 1961 Hughes returned to Australia as a Research Fellow at the Australian National University, quickly establishing a strong reputation as a political scientist both here and overseas. He was impressed with the new behavioural approach to politics, which drew on psychology and sociology, but always blended this with an attention to law, history and public administration.

He published widely in Australian and comparative politics and, with Bruce Graham and Don Aitkin, produced comprehensive data sets on Australian elections which were indispensable in the pre-digital age. His books *The Prime Minister’s Policy Speech* (with John Western) and *Images and Issues: The Queensland State Elections of 1963 and 1966* were ground breaking.

Colin Hughes was appointed inaugural professor of Political Science and Head of Department at the University of Queensland in 1965. By now his expertise in electoral law and behaviour was unsurpassed. He continued to publish widely as well as carrying a heavy teaching load and appearing as an expert commentator in the media.

The year 1974 saw him back at the ANU as a Professorial Fellow; a member of the Priorities Review Staff and a federal electoral redistribution commissioner.

Colin Hughes was appointed the first Australian Electoral Commissioner in February 1984. He modernised the nation’s electoral apparatus, defended the AEC’s independence and gave special attention to electoral research and education.

Hughes did not believe in the reappointment of statutory officers and returned to Queensland as Professor of Political Science at UQ in 1989— at the time of the Fitzgerald Inquiry into police and government corruption.

Colin Hughes was appointed to the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission (EARC) and served as its interim Chairman in 1992.EARC effectively re-wrote Queensland’s electoral law and infused a much needed culture of ethics and accountability into public administration and governance. He regarded EARC as the pinnacle of his career.

Colin Hughes retired from the University of Queensland in 1995 but continued to publish, chaired the Queensland Constitutional Review Commission 1999-2000 and provided valued advice to the federal parliament’s Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

He was a polymath whose knowledge of world electoral affairs was unequalled and who could have held high academic positions in History or Public Law.

Always an internationalist, he simultaneously adhered to the dictum that ‘all politics is local’. He believed firmly in the need for the rigorous analysis of the political systems of Australia as well as those of the USA, Britain and elsewhere.

A pioneer of Australian political science, he was a good and valuable citizen.

He is survived by son John, daughter in law Lyn and grandchildren.

Brian Costar is Emeritus Professor at Swinburne University and was a colleague and friend of Colin Hughes.