



MEDIA RELEASE

Emergency Exit: seeking refuge in the shadow of fascism

New podcast uncovers the hidden legal histories of refugees who reshaped Australia

A new three-part podcast series, ***Emergency Exit: seeking refuge in the shadow of fascism***, explores the extraordinary stories of European refugees who escaped Nazi persecution, only to confront new forms of exclusion through Australia's legal and bureaucratic systems.

Narrated by discrimination and employment lawyer Josh Bornstein, the podcast draws on historical archives, expert analysis and family accounts to reveal how immigration laws, wartime internment and post-war migration policies shaped the lives of displaced people who would go on to make lasting contributions to Australian law, academia and public life.

Across three episodes, the series introduces listeners to the concept of "bureaucratic violence": the ways seemingly ordinary administrative rules, paperwork and legal processes can profoundly affect people's lives. From the struggle to secure visas before the Second World War, to the war-time classification of Jewish refugees as "enemy aliens", and the challenges faced by new arrivals trying to rebuild their lives in Australia, *Emergency Exit* examines how law can both protect and exclude.

The series features the voices of leading legal historians, migration scholars and family members, combined with records uncovered from deep in the archives, to bring these remarkable stories to life. Together, they explore themes of justice, belonging, identity, displacement and resilience, while reflecting on the enduring impact these historical systems and ideologies have on contemporary debates about migration, citizenship and the rule of law.

At the heart of *Emergency Exit* are individuals whose determination transformed adversity into achievement and forged new communities. Despite facing discrimination and exclusion, many became influential lawyers, scholars and public intellectuals, leaving an enduring legacy within Australia's legal system.



Combining compelling storytelling with rigorous historical research, *Emergency Exit: seeking refuge in the shadow of fascism* offers a timely examination of how bureaucracy shapes human lives and asks what responsibilities modern societies have to ensure legal systems remain fair, humane and accountable.

Episode summaries

Episode One: *Escape*

As Nazism spreads across Europe in the late 1930s, thousands desperately seek refuge from persecution. The opening episode explores the hidden power of bureaucracy, revealing how immigration paperwork, visa requirements and restrictive policies became life-or-death obstacles for those attempting to flee. Through the stories of anthropologist Camilla Wedgwood, musician Richard Fuchs, and lawyers Eduard Korten and Rudolph Kahn, the episode examines Australia's immigration framework under the White Australia Policy and reveals the profound injustice it produced.

Episode Two: *Enemy Alien*

The outbreak of the Second World War transformed thousands of refugees into suspected enemies. This episode follows German Jewish lawyer and anthropologist Leonhard Adam, who escaped Nazi Germany only to be interned in Britain and deported aboard the HMT *Dunera* to Australia as an "enemy alien". Through Adam's experience, the episode explores wartime fear, mass internment and the bureaucratic processes that ignored individual circumstances, while highlighting the resilience of those who built intellectual and cultural communities even in detention.

Episode Three: *Displaced*

The final episode traces the remarkable journey of Estonian legal scholar Ilmar Tammelo, who arrived in Australia through the post-war Displaced Persons Scheme. Selected under Australia's racially selective immigration program, Tammelo began as a forestry labourer before helping transform Australian legal education alongside renowned jurist Julius Stone. His story, and those of fellow émigré scholars including Otto Bondy, illustrates how refugee intellectuals overcame exclusion to build vibrant



scholarly communities and leave an enduring legacy on Australia's legal landscape.

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Talent biographies

Josh Bornstein: Narrator

Josh Bornstein is an Australian employment lawyer and Director, Corporate Regulation at The Australia Institute. Formerly a partner at Maurice Blackburn Lawyers, he has spent decades advocating for workers' rights and social justice. Josh has a personal connection to the series through his grandfather, who arrived in Australia in 1938 after fleeing escalating antisemitism in Poland.

Professor Katherine Biber

Professor Katherine Biber is a Professor of Law at the University of Technology Sydney and an internationally recognised interdisciplinary scholar working across legal history, criminology and socio-legal studies. Her research examines evidence and justice, with a particular focus on how legal systems shape experiences of exclusion, identity and power.

Associate Professor Sara Dehm

Associate Professor Sara Dehm is an Associate Professor of Law at the University of Technology Sydney whose research focuses on migration law, international law and refugee protection. Her work explores how legal systems regulate mobility, produce inequality and shape histories of displacement, borders and state power.

Professor Ana Filipa Vrdoljak

Professor Ana Vrdoljak is a UNESCO Chair in Cultural Heritage and International Law and



Co-Coordinator of the UNESCO-UNITWIN Network on Culture in Emergencies at the University of Technology Sydney specialising in international law, human rights and international humanitarian law. Her research examines the protection of culture and cultural heritage in conflict and post-conflict settings, alongside broader questions of legal accountability and reparations.

Mary Clare Adam

Mary Clare Adam is the daughter of Leonhard Adam and Julia Baillie. Born in 1945 and based in Berlin, she offers a unique personal perspective on her father's remarkable journey from Nazi persecution and wartime internment to becoming one of Australia's leading anthropologists.

The Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG

The Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG is a former Justice of the High Court of Australia and one of the nation's most distinguished legal figures. Throughout his judicial career and beyond, he has been a leading advocate for legal reform, human rights and international law, and reflects on the lasting influence of émigré scholars on Australian legal education, including those who taught him.

Arthur Glass

Arthur Glass is a retired legal academic specialising in international commercial arbitration, investment law and comparative legal systems. His scholarship has made significant contributions to legal education and the development of international dispute resolution in Australia. He was taught by emigre legal scholars at Sydney Law School.

Terry Kass

Terry Kass is a historian and Chief Archivist at the Estonian Archives in Sydney. He has extensive expertise in the history of the Estonian-Australian community and has played a key role in preserving the stories and records of post-war migration to Australia.