

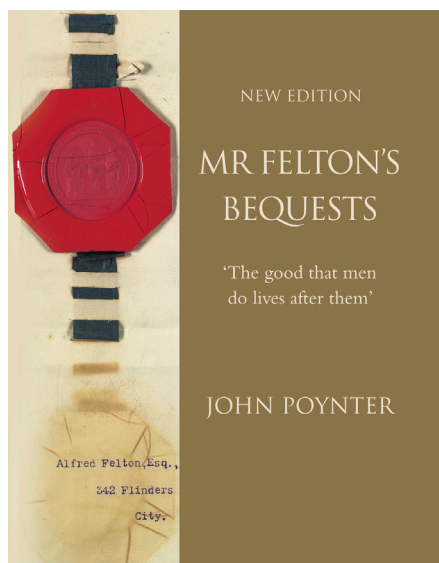
# MEDIA RELEASE

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*“a superb book . . . what the NGV failed to buy and the reasons for its acquisitions over the past 99 years make gripping reading in Poynter’s book.” — The Herald Sun*



## MR FELTON'S BEQUESTS

NEW EDITION

by John Poynter

‘THE GOOD THAT MEN DO LIVES AFTER THEM’

Alfred Felton, a bachelor of definite opinions and benignly eccentric habits, was one of the remarkable group of Melbourne merchants who dominated the economy of the Australian colonies in the decades after the gold rush. In 1904 he left his substantial fortune in trust, the income to be spent by a committee of his friends, half on charities (especially for women and children), and half on works of art for the National Gallery of Victoria, works calculated to ‘raise and improve public taste’. The Gallery suddenly gained acquisition funds greater than those of London’s National and Tate galleries combined, and between 1904 and 2004 more than 15 000 items were purchased for it by the Felton Bequest.

‘Although the last quarter of the twentieth century saw a dramatic and exciting expansion of Australian art museums’, Patrick McCaughey writes in the foreword of this book, ‘no institution could hope to replicate the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria assembled under the aegis of the Felton Bequest.’

How the Felton Bequests’ Committee carried out its tasks, in cooperation and sometimes in conflict with the Trustees of the Gallery, is a human story of many triumphs and occasional follies, of decisions made and unmade amid changing notions of art, philanthropy and public taste. John Poynter’s account of Felton’s life and the story of his Bequests covers most of Melbourne’s history, from the unusual view point of three themes: business, art and charity.

**John Poynter** is a Professorial Fellow in the School of Historical Studies at the University of Melbourne, and was formerly Ernest Scott Professor of History and a Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University. He spends his time in retirement writing history, biography and sardonic verse.

**MUP RRP \$89.95**

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**John Poynter will be available for interview in June.**

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