

When you're on a good thing ...

During the last few years there has been an explosion in online access to legal information. This is even more phenomenal when you consider that a substantial portion of this information is free.

I think it is safe to say, that in the realm of free access, the Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII) is the leader in its field. AustLII's own site states that there is over seven gigabytes of raw text materials and 1.5 million searchable documents.

The ideals of AustLII, free and improved access to justice through better access to information, have not been confined to Australia. An epidemic has been, and continues to rampage across the globe. We have seen the establishment of the British and Irish Legal Information Institute (BAILII), the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII), the Hong Kong Legal Information Institute (HKLII), the Legal Information Institute (Cornell) (LII) and the Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute (PacLII). All of these organisations sharing the philosophy of the AustLII and using the knowledge and technology developed through AustLII.

On 3 October 2002 at the 4th Law via the Internet Conference in Montreal, a number of organisations, including the ones listed above, adopted the "Montreal Declaration on Public Access to Law". The Declaration states that:

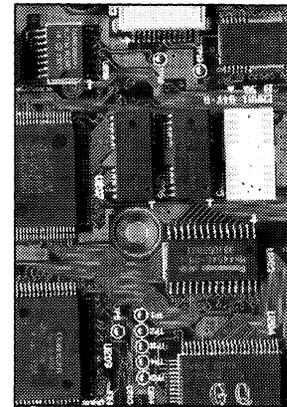
- *Public legal information from all countries and international institutions is part of the common heritage of humanity. Maximising*

access to this information promotes justice and the rule of law;

- *Public legal information is digital common property and should be accessible to all on a non-profit basis and, where possible, free of charge;*
- *Independent non-profit bodies that create or control that information should provide access to it so that it can be published.*

Public legal information, as used in the declaration, is considered to be legal information produced by public bodies that have a duty to produce law and make it public. This includes primary sources such as legislation, case law and treaties and extends to secondary public sources such as law reform commission reports and reports from inquiries.

The manifestation of these principles is WorldLII (www.worldlii.org). While WorldLII has been around as a prototype for some time, it has now been formally released. WorldLII provides a single search facility for the databases located on the other Legal Information Institute sites as well as a considerable amount of material not found on other LIIs. At the time of its release WorldLII consisted of 270 databases from 48 jurisdictions in 20



countries. In addition to the legal databases, WorldLII offers a catalog of law-related web sites in every country of the world (reportedly over 15,000 sites are cataloged). Many of these sites themselves are searchable from WorldLII itself.

The growth of availability of legal information electronically is placing an increasing emphasis on electronic legal researching techniques. With the use of similar, if not identical, interfaces to that of the other Legal Information Institutes, WorldLII has avoided the traditional problems of having to learn how a new interface operates and all the idiosyncrasies that go along with it. For even the most novice user of AustLII, WorldLII is ready to use.

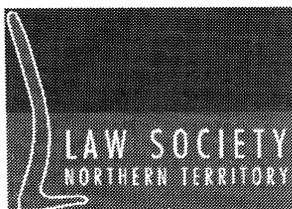
2003 Cricket World Cup

If your interest in cricket is anything like mine, then the World Cup is must see television and you will be dreading the late nights (early mornings) for the next few weeks. For all your information needs you cannot go past www.cricinfo.com and www.baggygreen.com.au.

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