

Twenty years ago the internet was in its formative stages, the term 'e-commerce' did not exist, and 'cyberspace' was a word one heard only on *Star Trek*. Today, the internet, cyberspace and e-commerce are part of our daily lives and there is a growing body of law covering them. This edition of *Precedent* provides a taste of the many issues relating to the internet and online activities, and their legal ramifications.

Many intellectual property issues arise concerning the internet and information technology. One common issue is copyright; the law in this area has struggled to keep pace with technological change. Professor Kathy Bowrey discusses the practice of downloading music from the internet, where the application of copyright law has been fraught with controversy. A second common issue is domain names and the evolution of 'cybersquatting'. In his article, John Swinson covers the development of domain name law, how domain name disputes can arise and how they can be resolved.

The law has an important role to play in e-commerce. But the online environment poses particular challenges, since the inherent characteristics of the internet mean that e-commerce challenges some fundamental concepts of contract law. Timothy Beale examines the particular challenges posed by the online environment as regards contract law, and Gaye Middleton writes on jurisdiction clauses in online consumer contracts.

Where there is commercial or economic activity, there is crime. Criminal laws and technologies have developed to regulate, prevent and deter criminal conduct on or through the internet. Dr Gregor Urbas writes on online child-grooming in Australia and the provisions enacted to tackle this area of online offending, while Michael Paphazy describes the emergence of specific laws to deal with online identity theft – an ever-increasing proportion of identity fraud, which is believed to be Australia's fastest growing crime – in several Australian jurisdictions.

Many privacy issues arise in relation to online activities, especially social networking sites. Anna Johnston and Stephen Wilson focus on privacy problems confronting Facebook, particularly its indirect collection of personal information and permissive default privacy settings, which would appear to breach Australian privacy laws.

This edition of *Precedent* also contains a contribution from Justice Peter Vickery of the Supreme Court of Victoria on future trends in electronic filing systems and electronic case management systems in Australian courts; a contribution from Andrew Wilkie, member for Denison, on our addiction to poker machines and the need to reform this particular form of gambling; and a guide to useful internet resources for lawyers from Ngaire Watson. ■

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This issue of *Precedent* is cited as (2011) 103 PRECEDENT. ISSN 1449-7719 © 2011 Australian Lawyers Alliance, ABN 96 086 880 499
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