

The Commission in its discussion paper *Education* stated: "Indeed in a certain sense, the present public reaction to the drug 'problem' is a bigger problem than the adverse effects of the drugs themselves".¹⁶ Unfortunately, public attitudes do not seem to have changed significantly, and much of the *Final Report's* recommendations will, as with those of other Drug Reports, gather dust. But that is not to say that the efforts of the Commission have been wasted. In a period of two years, the Commission has produced a substantial body of information, analysed and demonstrated with considerable skill the complexities of the issue and presented an essentially coherent approach to the "problem". One can only hope that the Commission's efforts will generate attention to these issues in academic and professional circles and provide a major base for the kinds of discussion that have been painfully absent in the past.

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Legal Resources Book (NSW), edited by M. MOBBS, LL.B. (A.N.U.), Solicitor of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. (Redfern Legal Centre Limited, Sydney, 1978) loose-leaf service. Recommended retail price \$13.00 purchased at the Redfern Legal Centre, \$15.00 sent by post or delivered, \$6.00 Update service (first year's subscription including postage) (ISBN: 0 9595703 0 6).

Modern legal services commissions are invariably empowered to initiate educational programmes to promote a better understanding by the public of their rights and duties under the law. One could not envisage a better way in which such a mandate could be fulfilled than by publishing and propagating the work under review. In New South Wales the chicken has come before the egg as at the date of writing we are still awaiting the final outcome of a Legal Services Commission Bill.

When launching this book recently at the Redfern Legal Centre, the Attorney-General of New South Wales, the Honourable Frank Walker, referred to it as a "landmark". By so doing, he aptly described a publication which fulfills a large awaited need in this State to provide a reasonably priced practical reference source where the legal principles applicable to the vast smorgasbord of problems confronting the man in the street are set out in a most readable form divorced from any unnecessary legal jargon.

This publication can lay claim to being the first local textbook of which I am aware encompassing the often unclearly defined concept of "poverty law". "Poverty law" is not a self-contained discipline, rather, it is an amalgam of those various branches of existing disciplines that have particular reference to the needs of the socially disadvantaged. The framework of this concept emerges clearly as one progresses through the chapters and headings of the book. For example, the law

¹⁶ *Education* (a discussion paper) (1978) 14-15.

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relating to "Single Parents", "De Facto Marriages", "Family Violence" and "Changing your Name" are relatively minor aspects of Family Law. Nevertheless, the problems associated with these subjects have considerable significance to disadvantaged groups as is evidenced by the frequency with which the problems arising from them are brought to community legal centres. The same can be said for the headings "Arrest and Interrogation", "Bail" and the chapter on "Prisoners" all of which are dealt with on a comparatively marginal basis in most traditional criminal law courses of study.

Most of the headings contain a clear and concise summary of what to the layperson is so often an uninterpretable mass of legal jargon. Headings under "Tax" and "Bankruptcy" are striking examples of this, both areas tending so often to confuse with the abstruse language of statutes allied to the legal complexity of the varying factual situations involved in their consideration.

The Editor was indeed fortunate to have been able to enlist the co-operation and whole-hearted assistance of so many well qualified contributors. The names listed at the beginning of the book read like a "Who's Who" of the well known forward thinking lawyers who are presently contributing in both the academic and practising fields to promote social awareness of existing legal anomalies and to effect social justice by effective law reforms.

The chapter on "Crime" is excellent in every way. It highlights the rights and duties inherent in criminal procedure from the standpoint of the individual caught up in the toils of the law in a sympathetic and at the same time a realistic and practical manner. The sensible advice on the limits to which strict legal rights should be relentlessly enforced in given situations could only have come from a seasoned and experienced criminal lawyer. Many other headings deal with subject matter that cannot readily be researched. The chapters on "Environment", "Welfare", "Discrimination" and "Complaints" are examples of concise and lucid summaries of specific areas of law in which the experienced practitioner has great difficulty in collating source material, particularly in the absence of wide library facilities.

This book is a must for anyone involved in social welfare work or for active members of community groups. It will be a boon to practising lawyers, particularly to those whose normal involvement does not include the fundamental socio-legal type of practice. The subject matter would form the basis of an excellent syllabus for a high school curriculum on civics. The increased community awareness of basic legal rights that would flow from such a far-sighted initiative is surely something to speculate on.

One comment in mild criticism perhaps could be offered. As the book represents many individual contributions all of which endeavoured to incorporate the broadest possible coverage of their field and as some of the chapters and headings represent two and sometimes three individual contributions, there is a noticeable duplication of information. This is particularly obvious in the "Consumers" section and also in the headings "Motor Vehicles" and "Insurance". I would suggest that there

be a heavier editing of further editions with a view to rectifying the slightly disjointed effect of this repetition. This may be to a large extent the totally subjective reaction of one who has traversed the book from cover to cover within a relatively narrow time compass and would probably be unnoticed by the vast majority of those using it who will invariably be considering single aspects at a time.

The very handy reference to bibliography and contact points at the end of each heading is a novel concept. With the constant expansion of governmental and semi-governmental agencies and the increasing network of social welfare organisations, it is difficult at times to relate problems to appropriate sources of assistance. Too often those seeking solutions to individual socio-legal problems spend unnecessary time and effort that could be obviated by quick reference to an existing contact point created and geared to solve the problem in hand expertly and promptly.

I would also stress the vital need to update the book continuously. Its efficacy is essentially dependent on its contemporary relevance. This need is, of course, anticipated in the proposed follow-up service and unless the same is available the publication would lose its relevance in a very short time. As an example, it is worth noting that in the short time since its publication, it is now rendered obsolete in its discussion of "Bail" due to a recent legislative enactment. The impending legislation on "Legal Aid" and "Summary Offences" will undoubtedly make further heavy inroads on its present contents.

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