

Working in the Israeli Ministry of Justice

By Ben Fisher

Working in government demands one to understand everyday people with everyday issues. Upon entering the Israeli Ministry of Justice (**Ministry**), I was made to realize this from day one. Each time I arrived at the Ministry building I was reminded of the country I was in, and the fundamental challenges it still faces. Israel is a nation made up of refugees, and was established by willpower rather than steady infrastructure. The first task I received was to research the development of legislation of equal rights for people with disabilities. In this area Israel still lags behind much of the developed world – largely due to its lack of resources.

Upon arriving at the Ministry, which is metres from the heart of Arab East Jerusalem, I witnessed a clash and co-existence of cultures. I was introduced to an office comprised of article clerks of Jewish European, Jewish Middle Eastern and Arab Christian background, and to my boss, a British Ex-pat. This was Israel. It was not the Jewish Israel I was taught about in Australia, but a country which is home to people from a vast array of cultures and backgrounds.

The Ministry was always abuzz. A high paced society exists in Israel; mornings begin early, days last into the evening, and one is still expected to go out most nights. With a single day weekend (Sunday is a working day), there is no time to sleep. But at the same time, even though I was merely an intern, the secretaries became like second mothers, and everyone throughout the

Ministry was always willing to explain and answer questions.

Among my tasks, chiefly regarding disability and labour law matters, was the role of reporting on my research to committees which were conducted in the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament) and attended by the ministers and members of Parliament. I was taken aback by the extent to which law-making was a 'work shopping' of ideas in Israel. In writing the Equal Rights for People With Disabilities legislation, representatives from the police, municipal councils, Finance Ministry, Members and civil and criminal departments of the Ministry ministers and disabled representatives met bi-weekly to iron-out difficult sections of the bills to be passed. I never believed that government agencies really dealt with the issues of individuals until I participated in those meetings.

Furthermore, I was often able to meet the people affected by the agency's work. I was allowed to sit in on meetings involving ordinary individuals. Government agencies are still a part of everyday society in Israel. They deal with the everyday obstacles that people face.

Working in the Ministry gave me an opportunity to see a face of the law that I had not encountered at university. I worked with people who cared about making a difference for all of their countrymen – a concept sometimes overlooked in such a divided country. My work at the Israeli Ministry of Justice showed me the impact individuals can make – the difference that I can make! This internship has changed my outlook on the relevance of law and lawyers to society. ■

Monitoring Employees at Work (continued from page 3)

provided the employee is performing work for the employer at that time.

Use of covert surveillance records

The Act prohibits the use and disclosure of records or information obtained by covert surveillance, subject to a limited number of exceptions.

Where the covert surveillance is authorised covert surveillance, the information or records obtained may be used:

- where that use is authorised under the covert surveillance authority;
- to establish an employee's involvement in unlawful activity; and
- for various other law enforcement and security purposes.

Where the covert surveillance is not authorised, the information or records obtained may only be used and disclosed in the detection, investigation or prosecution of an offence by a law enforcement agency.

Corporate liability

Where a corporation contravenes any provision of the Act, a director of the corporation will be deemed to have personally contravened the same provision if he or she "knowingly authorised or permitted the contravention".

Implications

Employers operating in New South Wales will have to ensure that their Internet access and email policies are

reviewed and, if necessary, updated to meet the notification requirements of the Act. It is important to note that the Act does not require employees' consent to surveillance, but simply that they are notified. Nonetheless, employee advocates operating within the NSW jurisdiction should check an employer's compliance with the Act, where reliance is placed on information obtained through surveillance to discipline or dismiss an employee. ■

Quick Quiz answers

1. The Mystery of Edwin Drood
2. Sirimavo Bandaranaike (Sri Lanka)
3. Mauve
4. National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations
5. Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)
6. Friedrich Engels
7. Dong
8. House of Lancaster and House of York
9. The Vedas
10. US sports tycoon, Malcolm Glazer
11. Douglas Wood
12. Mahmoud Abbas
13. Pius IX and St Peter
14. Ibrahim Jaafari
15. Australia and Antigua