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Commonwealth and State Legislation on CD-ROM: Anstat, Aunty Abha & Computer Law Services

There have been some significant changes in the legislation CD-ROM marketplace brought about by Computer Law Services (CLS) being taken over by LBC and more legislation becoming freely available on the Internet. It has meant that the existing arrangement for LBC Information to sell Aunty Abha legislation products and Aunty Abha to sell LBC Annotations has been discontinued The publishers have also been looking to add value to their products in the more competitive environment

Content Features

Aunty Abha released Western Australian legislation in February this year thereby offering equivalent jurisdictions to CLS. Both CLS and Aunty Abha are in the process of adding links to judicially considered decisions, commencing with the Commonwealth and proceeding to state jurisdictions Updating of case annotations will coincide with the legislation updates. Anstat provide Commonwealth, Victorian and NSW acts, regulations and bills on CD-ROM and amendments are linked to the principal act before a consolidation of the act is made.

Because customers can now retain the previous releases of legislation CD-ROMs for retrospective purposes, all repealed legislation has been removed from current releases

Functionality Enhancement

Both CLS and Aunty Abha have introduced a 'cases' button to be used to link the legislation with the chronological list of case annotations Queensland legislation from CLS will be available in Folio Views as well as Innerview software from April this year so that subscribers can choose their preferred system. It appears that Anstat is leaning towards development of the online Internet version of the product

Internet Sites

Anstat, Aunty Abha and CLS all have Internet sites which are updated regularly with product information, although Anstat only offers information on online services. CLS has a useful regular feature in Product News called *Some Tips on Searching* while Anstat have a *Guest Access* browse to Victorian, NSW and Northern Territory legislation. The Aunty Abha site lists an update service by jurisdiction of new and amending legislation which will be included in the next CD-ROM release.

Pricing Policy

All publishers have various pricing and licence fee structures which can be obtained on application to Customer Services. There is cost benefit in subscribing to all CD-ROMs through CLS while Aunty Abha offer free access to remaining databases after subscribing to two jurisdictions CD-ROM subscribers to the Anstat services are entitled to single user online access and a commitment has been made to minimise the cost for additional user licences.

URLS

Anstat http://www.anstat.com.au
Aunty Abha http://www.auntyabha.com.au
CLS http://www.cls.com.au

Internet: State and Federal Parliament Web Sites

Federal Parliament

http://www.aph.gov.au/

The Commonwealth Parliament Site is well set out and easily navigated. Parts of it are still under construction, but even in its present form it contains a wealth of useful information. Information is accessed via the headings – **Senate**, **House**, **Committees**, **Legislation**, **Who's Who**, *Hansard* and **Library**.

There is a comprehensive index and a useful site map. The search engine for the site was "under construction" when I visited.

The index promised maiden speeches for Members and Senators, but as yet only a selection are available. I found the inclusion of publications such as *Odgers* and *Standing Orders* for both Houses very useful. There is a link to *Hansard* and other information about the Constitutional Convention, which made it easy to track the debate as it occurred.

The only disappointing feature of the site is the search engine for *Hansard*. This is only a trial search engine, and is to be replaced in the future, but the existing search engine is quite clumsy and difficult to use.

New South Wales

http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/

The New South Wales Parliament Web site gives access to information in the following categories -

* **General Information** (including a virtual tour of Parliament).
* **Legislative Council** and **Legislative Assembly** – the sections for each House list publications and resources, but do not offer full text access from the site.
* *Hansard* – *Hansard* is accessible by date only. There is an index to *Hansard*, but no search facility.
* **Business Papers**
* **For Schools** – includes fact sheets, historical information, members lists for both Houses, and a virtual tour of Parliament House.

* **Search** – this searches all parts of the site except *Hansard*. There are no help screens and no field searching
* **Links** – the links are well set out – they are published and maintained by the Parliamentary Library

Queensland

http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/

The Queensland Parliament's Web page (and Tasmania's) offers one of the best search engines for Hansard of all the pages visited. The search engine supports Boolean searching with a user-friendly interface, and returns results very quickly. Results are given as full-day Hansard in pdf format. Hansard is available back to 1990.

Other information available from the Parliament's Web page includes -

* **History** – historical information, a virtual tour, and a discussion of the major political parties
* **Members** – biographical information on members of parliament accessible in a variety of ways.
* **Committees** – including the full text of committee reports
* **Tables Office** – lists sitting dates for the present year, allows users to search the *Votes and Proceedings* from 1992 to the present, and gives access to the *Master Bills Register* (a listing of Bills presently before Parliament and their status), today's *Notice Paper*, and the current *Bills Information Paper*.
* **Library** – provides access to research bulletins and legislation bulletins.
* **Proceedings of the Youth Parliament**

South Australia

http://www.sa.gov.au/government/sagov.htm

There is no Parliamentary Web site as such for South Australia. Instead, there are links to information about Parliament from the *SA Government* section of *SA Central* – **http://www.sa.gov.au**.

SA Central is the umbrella site for news, tourism, sports and recreation, arts and entertainment, community, health, education and science in South Australia. The *Parliament* heading in the *SA Government* section of *SA Central* provides access to information on the Premier, the Ministers, Shadow Cabinet, members of Parliament, and gives sitting dates for Parliament. There is no access to *Hansard*, bills lists, or the parliamentary library from this area.

Tasmania

http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au

The Tasmanian Parliament Website provides access to a large amount of information, much of it searchable. The available information includes -

- **Parliament** – a virtual tour of both Houses, with general information.
- **Legislative Council** and **House of Assembly** – includes members' contact and biographical details, the current *Notice Paper*, the sitting schedule and more
- **Committees** – members of committees and the terms of reference for each committee.
- **Email contact list** – an extensive list of email addresses for staff and members.
- **Links** to Tasmanian Web sites, other government Web sites and other parliamentary Web sites.
- **Parliamentary library** – provides access to the catalogue, factual information, email contact to research services staff, and fact sheets on topics ranging from Bicameral to Joint Sittings, to Quorum.
- *Hansard* – uses the same search engine as is used in Queensland (Isys web). *Hansard* is available back to 1992. *Votes and Proceedings* and *Notice Papers* are also searchable.

Victoria

http://www.vicnet.net.au/vicnet/vicgov/parl/parlia.html

This is an example of how a parliamentary Web page should work. While there is no obvious link to this page from the Victorian government page **http://**

www.vic.gov.au, once you find it, the site is very impressive. Not surprisingly, it is produced by the Library of the Parliament of Victoria.

The site provides access to material under the headings – Members of Parliament, Sitting Dates, *Hansard*, Education, The House, Democracy, Committees, Index, and Legislative Documents.

Librarians are most likely to use **Legislative Documents http://www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au/** frequently.

There are three parts to the Legislative Documents section –

- **Parliamentary Documents** (*Hansard*, Bills, Parliamentary Papers);
- **Victorian Statute Books** (Acts and Rules, available in alphabetic or numeric order, and searchable); and,
- **Victorian Law Today**.

Victorian Law Today is the most exciting and innovative area. It promises:

When completed this repository will contain all Principal Public Acts and Principal Statutory Rules of Victoria. Each Act and Statutory Rule will be kept up to date as it is amended and a new consolidated version lodged. You will be able to search for Acts or Statutory Rules, or both, by title or keyword. The search will retrieve the relevant law.

You can view the law as it is in operation today, or, by nominating a previous version of the law, view the law in effect at a particular point in time after 1 July 1997. To do this, select the version of the Act for the period which includes the point in time in which you are interested. The system will display the law as it was at that point.

Unfortunately, this feature is available for dates after July 1997 only, but even so, it is a great time saving mechanism. If only it was available for all jurisdictions.

Western Australia

http://www.wa.gov.au/parl/index.html

The Western Australian Parliament site offers *Fact Sheet* style information on the history of the WA Parliament, how elections are held (but not the last election results), functions, procedure, the roles of various people in Parliament, and the symbolism behind the mace and the black rod.

It also lists the titles of the Parliamentary Committees, but offers no information on members, terms of reference or reports.

Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly – The Legislative Council page is in development and at this stage offers a list of members with contact details but no email addresses. The Legislative Assembly age offers a similar list of members of officers, and includes information on presenting petitions to Parliament.

The full text of the reports of the Commission on Government is one of the more interesting pieces of information available on this fairly basic web site.

Australian Capital Territory

http://www.legassembly.act.gov.au

Information available on this site is set out under the headings – **Daily Program, Minutes of Proceedings, Notice Papers, Fact sheets, Members,** and **Library.**

The topics of fact sheets include the history of self government in the ACT, the Chamber, *Hansard*, and electing members of the Legislative Assembly. The members list has links to biographical information and photographs of members. The Committee page lists members of committees, but does not include terms of reference or full text reports. The library page includes access to the catalogue, and links to parliaments on the Web and Web resources.

Northern Territory

http://www.nt.gov.au/lant/

The Northern Territory Legislative Assembly site is another excellent parliamentary Web site. This site easily competes with the others in terms of the amount of full text information available and the user-friendliness of the site.

Information available includes –
* A list of **members** with basic contact details and a link to more details and email addresses
* **Information papers**, tour times (not a "virtual tour" as is available on some other sites), and **sitting dates.**
* *Hansard* – both daily and consolidated for each Assembly. Lotus Notes is used to index these and make them searchable. The search engine is easy to use and produces fast, accurate results
* **Consolidated Northern Territory legislation** is also available and is searchable.
* Details of **Parliamentary Committees** are available, including committee members and reports of committees.
* **The Remuneration Tribunal decision** is available in full text, as is a large amount of information about the *Rights of the Terminally Ill Act.* The information available about this Act includes the original Act, the amended Act, press releases and speeches, and copies of defeated bills that attempted to repeal the original Act

List of URLs

Commonwealth	**http://www.aph.gov.au/**
New South Wales	**http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/**
Queensland	**http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/**
South Australia	**http://www.sa.gov.au/government/sagov.htm**
Tasmania	**http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au**
Victoria	**http://www.vicnet.net.au/vicnet/vicgov/parl/parlia.html**
Western Australia	**http://www.wa.gov.au/parl/index.html**
ACT	**http://www.legassembly.act.gov.au**
Northern Territory	**http://www.nt.gov.au/lant/**