

In summary, the legislative changes since February 1992 render much of the discussion in the book historical to those currently involved in enterprise bargaining. The 'strategies' chapter and the overview which ties together the issues and debate as it existed in early 1992 are the most helpful aspects of the text.

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A Strategy for Justice

Legal Action Group, 242 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9UN; 1992; 172 pp.

A Strategy for Justice gives a comprehensive review of existing legal aid arrangements in England and Wales together with comparative material from other countries, namely the Netherlands, two provinces of Canada (Quebec and Ontario) and two States of Australia (New South Wales and Victoria). The information on these other legal aid systems provides valuable food for thought for legal aid policy makers in Australia.

The book has four sections:

- the history and current status of publicly funded legal services in England and Wales; studies of the legal needs in England and Wales in four specific areas (family disputes, personal injury claims, debt matters and employment related issues);
- review of service delivery systems in other countries; an agenda for review of the scope, administration and delivery of legal services in England and Wales.

Of the systems reviewed, the legal aid system in England and Wales involves the greatest legal aid expenditure per head of population, that is, 12 pounds in 1989. New South Wales and the Netherlands spent just over half this amount while Victoria and Quebec spent around 8 pounds and Ontario about ten pounds. The legal aid cost in England and Wales continues to increase and in 1991-92 was 907 million pounds. (This figure does not even include administration costs.) This very significant expenditure indicates what could well result if the Australian legal aid system were more demand driven rather than being constrained by unrealistically low funding levels.

Legal aid expenditure represents a significant share of the total fees generated by the English and Welsh private legal profession, namely 11% for solicitors and 30% for barristers. The salaried legal sector is limited to some 60 community law centres. Because practitioners have a high financial stake in the scheme, they provide articulate support for legal aid being a state funded service.

The international comparisons make interesting reading and show how the systems in place elsewhere differ significantly from those in Australia. In the Netherlands, many more civil cases receive legal aid than criminal cases (257,000 to 71,100 in 1989). Further, the Dutch private legal profession has maintained a strong tradition of professional responsibility towards legal aid work even though remuneration rates were last altered back in 1981 when they were reduced by 10%. In Ontario, members of the Provincial Law Society pay a compulsory levy of \$175 as a contribution towards the legal aid system. Should we ask why the Law Council of Australia did not make any similar suggestions in its submission to the Senate Costs of Justice Inquiry?

The system in Quebec includes the very strong performance of the public legal education section of the Commission des Services Juridiques. The department uses a continuing legal information radio program which is transmitted by 110 French language stations throughout Quebec. For the past 14 years it has produced a television series of 26 programs a year dramatising issues about legal rights. On a more disconcerting note, the situation of the Director of the Quebec Commission is food for thought. In his 1989-90 report, Yves Lafontaine expressed increasing concern at the Government's failure to upgrade eligibility for legal aid. Sadly, shortly afterwards, Lafontaine was dismissed from his post and the next Annual Report of the Commission contained only a passing reference to low eligibility levels.

The section in the book on Australia shows a strong understanding of legal aid in Victoria and New South Wales. The discussion focuses on Redfern

Legal Service and specialist centres like the Consumer Credit Legal Service in Victoria. One significant issue which is not highlighted is the very substantial proportion of Australian legal aid funding generated by contributions from legally assisted persons (22.9% in Victoria and 13.4% in NSW in 1989-90). In Ontario, client contributions amounted to barely 5% of total funding (\$9 million out of \$173.8 million).

The book does not make very detailed and specific recommendations as to reforms. Rather, it seeks to give a framework for planning future developments. Given the lack of a substantial salaried legal sector in England and Wales, greater consideration of the pros, cons, practicalities and politics of expanding salaried service provision would have been useful. Reviews of this nature can only further the debate about legal aid and hopefully result in more accessible and effective services being provided to greater numbers of people. In this sense, 'A Strategy for Justice' makes a significant contribution.

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