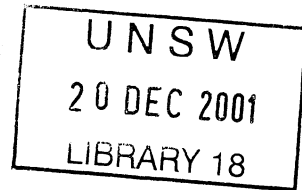


# Freedom of Information

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# Review

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## Comment

This issue deals with a mixed bag of issues and topics. The first article is by Al Roberts, who has recently moved from Queen's University in Canada to head up the Campbell Public Affairs Institute at Syracuse University, New York — an interdisciplinary research organisation. His article looks at the operation of information rights involving multilateral institutions. Roberts concludes that access rules will be a limited but useful tool for promoting democratisation within the European Union. The level of utility will be less for individual citizens, but potentially increased for non-governmental organisations and media not already privileged with access to information within the European Union.

The second article is by Shane Sody tracing the similarities and differences between two proposals for reform in South Australia. The majority parties have rejected the more radical and innovative of the reforms and even the fate of the less ambitious reforms is uncertain. The Opposition Labor Party in South Australia, most likely with a high expectation of soon occupying ministerial offices, has shown little inclination to improve Fol in that State.

In the 'Recent Developments' section are two reminders of how access to information is always a series of a few faltering steps intermingled with massive backsliding. The UK government has delayed the introduction of Fol for the maximum time possible. The Blair government is set to create a multitude of new records in the perpetuation of secrecy stakes. There was once upon a time when words and commitments uttered in Opposition were seen to be sacred pledges to be honoured in government. Meanwhile the Beattie Labor government in Queensland decides to mothball an excellent discussion paper on Fol and cut straight to the chase by instituting exactly the type of fee regime designed to restrict the use of the legislation.

Last December my Christmas wish was for one of our media moguls to take their fourth estate role seriously enough to think about donating some funds for some serious Fol research and advocacy. I will put that particular Christmas sock back out again this year. Yes Virginia, there is a Father Christmas.

**Rick Snell**