

Freedom of Information

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Review

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Comment

Back in Issue 100 I contemplated 'Where to for the *Fol Review*?' I made a number of suggestions about where this journal could make significant contributions to the analysis, discussion, critique and promotion of effective access to information regimes. These suggestions included articles that explored the nexus between Fol and other topics (privacy, whistleblowing, information policy) and from the perspectives of non-law disciplines (history, political science etc), exploring the international aspects of information access, more case studies, internal perspectives (especially from administrators) and jurisdictional updates.

An examination of this issue and the rest of the content in 2003 demonstrates that those goals are being achieved. Articles have covered Fol issues in Australia, Canada, Japan, Ireland and South Africa. We have had insider viewpoints from an Fol manager in Canada and a prisoner in Victoria. Chris Finn made the case for reconceptualising the way commercial in confidence is applied. Al Roberts and Stephen Lambie explored the use of Fol in foreign policy. Stephen Lambie also responded to my call for truly comparative studies. Robert Vaughn and Stephen Homewood explored the nexus between whistleblowing and Fol in both the USA and the UK. Justice Michael Kirby explored developments in information privacy law and policy at both the national and international levels.

This issue continues with the above themes. The first article is an extract from the last annual report from Bronwyn Keighley-Gerardy as Information Commissioner for Western Australia. It represents the voice of someone committed to an effective regime of information management and access who is unwilling on principle to compromise with proposed government changes. The second article, also from Western Australia, outlines an innovative and exciting contribution to the analysis of Fol from a journalism perspective. The project will attempt to create a Freedom of Information Index that measures the gap between the promise and the practice of Fol legislation. The third article is a combination of a short essay and a set of briefing papers produced by one of my law students this semester. His central theme, richly informed by the work of Joseph Stiglitz and others, argues that there needs to be a switch from Fol practice being focused on individual document access to a regime that is information based.

I would like once again to thank the subscribers, readers and contributors who have made the *Fol Review* able to live up to, almost, all of the plethora of definitions for 'review' that can be found in the *Macquarie Dictionary*. Furthermore the range, type and variety of articles have deeply enriched the study, practice and critique of Fol, in particular, and information access policy more generally. The past 108 issues of the *Review* have contributed enormously to what Al Roberts has labelled the Information Commons — that 'intangible pool of information about community [and political affairs] which must be publicly accessible for citizens to engage intelligently in the act of self-government'. Yet the need is for you as subscribers and readers to let me know what you want to see in the *Fol Review* and, as always, we need contributors ready to share their insights, critiques, analysis, ideas and perspectives.

I wish one and all the best for Christmas and the New Year.

Rick Snell