


# Legal current awareness via the internet

## – Keeping up to date and out of trouble!

Recent years have witnessed a steady increase in legislative activity and volume of cases before the courts. Enhancements in technological capability have presented the legal profession with a myriad of ways of accessing legal information. In 1992, an article entitled 'The information age, lawyers and negligence'<sup>1</sup> was published in the Law Institute Journal. The opening paragraph poses the sombre question 'are lawyers failing in their duty to clients by not making use of reasonably available

information technology tools to carry out research and inquiries?'. This question became very real for the lawyers advising on the NRMA float whom the New South Wales Supreme Court found negligent partly because they failed to warn of the possible impact of a High Court judgment which had been heard, but the decision had not yet been handed down, at the time the boards voted to proceed with the float.<sup>2</sup> In essence, they failed to anticipate and warn about a possible change in the law. The damages amounted to over \$21 million plus interest. This decision was later overturned on appeal<sup>3</sup> but the importance of keeping up to date and using technology to your advantage is an obvious theme.

The table below outlines some *free* current awareness services available to

assist lawyers in keeping up to date with Australian legislative change and new case law developments. These services generally deliver legal updates and other legal news to your email inbox often on a daily basis. Each service offers a different type of facility and varying coverage of the different jurisdictions. Subscribing to a variety of services will give you the best current awareness updates. 

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### Footnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> (1992) 66 (3) *Law Institute Journal* 139.
- <sup>2</sup> "Failed NRMA Float Sinks Lawyers" *Australian Financial Review* 14 May 1999, p. 1.
- <sup>3</sup> "Court overturns NRMA award" *Australian Financial Review* 22 December 2000, p. 6.

CURRENT AWARENESS SERVICE	CONTENT AND OTHER COMMENTS	HOW TO SUBSCRIBE
<b>Legal Express</b> (LexisNexis Butterworths)	<i>Legal Express News</i> – news stories featured in major Australian and overseas newspapers <i>Daily Cases</i> – digests from all judgments from the High Court, Federal Court and State Supreme Courts. <i>Daily Legislation</i> – latest legislative information drawn from government gazettes and formal copies of legislation from all Australian jurisdictions.	<a href="http://www.lexislegal.com/aus/butterworths/ProductInfo/legalexpress/n.htm">http://www.lexislegal.com/aus/butterworths/ProductInfo/legalexpress/n.htm</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Click on 'Subscribe' on right hand side of the screen.</li> <li>• Delivered to your email inbox daily.</li> </ul>
<b>FindLaw Australia</b>	Alerts to legal news and new legislation and case law and provides a link to the full text of the case or legislation. A choice of jurisdictions is available. The case law alert allows you to select from one or more of the High Court, Federal Court and all the state courts of appeal.	<a href="http://www.findlaw.com.au">http://www.findlaw.com.au</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Click on FindLaw Newsletters and Alerts and then click on or scroll down to Free Alerting Services and select your coverage of jurisdictions.</li> <li>• Delivered to your email inbox several times a week.</li> </ul>
<b>Legalinfo-Online</b>	This is a slightly different but very useful service. It is an announcement list for those interested in keeping track of new sites and developments in online access to legal information in Australia. It is very useful as it advises of new sites or changes to sites relating to Australian law including legislation, guides to the law and discussion papers.	<a href="http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/olap/legalinfo/index.html">http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/olap/legalinfo/index.html</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivered to you email inbox periodically as significant changes occur.</li> </ul>
<b>Daily Digest</b> (Thomson LawBook Co)	Alerts to changes in legislation, case law and policy in 12 key practice areas : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building &amp; construction law</li> <li>• Corporations and banking</li> <li>• Government law</li> <li>• Litigation &amp; practice</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications law</li> <li>• Criminal law</li> <li>• Intellectual property</li> <li>• Personal injury</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competition &amp; consumer law</li> <li>• Family law</li> <li>• Labour law</li> <li>• Property &amp; planning law</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.lbc.com.au/DailyDigest/d_SearchDigest.asp">http://www.lbc.com.au/DailyDigest/d_SearchDigest.asp</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to visit the web site to search for updates.</li> </ul>
<b>ScalePlus</b>	SCALEPlus is the legal information web site of the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. This service alerts to changes to Commonwealth and territory (e.g. Christmas Island) legislation (including Bills, explanatory memorandum, statutory rules and instruments).	<a href="http://scaleplus.law.gov.au/home.htm">http://scaleplus.law.gov.au/home.htm</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On left hand side click on "Notify Me When" and select legislative data of your choice.</li> <li>• Delivered to your email inbox as changes occur.</li> </ul>
<b>Parliamentary Counsel's Office (NSW)</b>	This is an on-line and e-mail service. It includes details of Bills introduced, amended, passed or enacted by the NSW Parliament, statutory instruments, details of any Bills released for public exposure purposes and reprints of NSW legislation completed.	<a href="http://www.pco.nsw.gov.au/">http://www.pco.nsw.gov.au/</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Click on Weekly Bulletin on left hand side of screen (email every Friday)</li> </ul>