

The biggest problem with this book is that by attempting to cover such a wide variety of situations, and in dealing with such complex issues in a relatively short space, it may end up not pleasing anybody. Political scientists and historians are likely to find some of the stories, such as those relating to East Timor, Lithuania, Nelson Mandela and Tiananmen Square, too short and simplistic. Non-lawyers may find the legal analysis too difficult and complex, such as the elaborate reasoning of the European Commission and Court of Human Rights in the *Belgian Linguistic* case. On the other hand, lawyers may regard some of the legal analysis as inadequate and superficial. For example, international lawyers may be critical of the failure to mention the law relating to the use of force, in particular the difficult secession/self-determination dichotomy. However, provided one is aware that the book is only meant as an introduction to a wide variety of human rights issues and some preliminary legal analysis, it is well worth reading. Should the reader desire to delve further into a particular issue, there are some excellent additional references at the end of each chapter.

Overall, despite some minor flaws, *Bringing Human Rights to Life* is very readable, serves as a useful introduction to and an overview of the most important human rights questions in the world today, and is a very welcome addition to the growing Australian literature on human rights.

**SAM GARKAWE**

*Sam Garkawe teaches law at Southern Cross University, Lismore.*

## The Law And You: A Young Person's Guide

*by Schools Legal Education Group; Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales, 1993.*

In this book for young people, the authors set out to educate school students about their basic legal rights. The target audience is year ten students but it could easily be read and understood by all high school students. It covers areas common to everyday life such as legal representation, criminal law, family law and children's rights, consumer rights, debts, employment and discrimination.

Within those broad subjects, the book addresses more detailed points with a view to not only making young people aware of their rights but letting them know how they can complain if those rights are infringed. This includes complaints about police, how a complaint of domestic violence can be made, how to complain about false advertising and other consumer rights matters.

The bonus in this book is the referral list. Some may complain that the list is far from exhaustive; however each chapter has a comprehensive list of community and governmental support bodies which can be contacted for help. Additionally, these bodies are mostly free and accessible to young people. This book is a simple annotated guide to the law which allows young people to find out about a particular area of the law, then go to a centre or agency which can help them with any specific problem they may have. Most of the chapters are relevant to all States of Australia and it could be easily amended for distribution in schools in other States.

Within each chapter a host of cartoons give practical illustrations of the law in action. These cartoons feature the possum brothers and the dingo gang in all sorts of situations where they use their basic rights to stand up for themselves. The underlying theme is knowing your rights. Some of the cartoons deal with difficult situations such as domestic violence and sexual harassment. The cartoons deal with these issues in a sensitive but uncompromising way. There are no excuses but simply a black and white statement of how the law stands. If something is illegal or unlawful then this is spelled out clearly.

Also included in the book is a list of definitions of useful terms such as bail, committal, indictable offence and Ombudsman. The meanings given to these often confusing terms are simple and concise. Some adults may argue that young people don't need this knowledge but realistically all areas discussed are those which impact on young people whether through their family, friends or their own lives.

*The Law and You* achieves its purpose in that it is quick and easy to read but detailed enough to empower young people. Should the book be insufficient, there is always the referral list. *The Law and You* could be introduced into the school curriculum along with other basic skills resources. The simplicity of it will be enjoyed by lawyers, law students and high school students alike.

**BILL MITCHELL**

*Bill Mitchell is a lawyer with Townsville Community Legal Service.*

## Offending Girls – Sex, Youth and Justice

*by Kerry Carrington; Allen & Unwin, 1993; \$21.95.*

Kerry Carrington's *Offending Girls – Sex, Youth and Justice* studies the interaction between the welfare and justice systems, and teenage girls in New South Wales. The cases are drawn mainly from the late 1970s, based on a statistical sample of 1046 girls, a detailed study of the case files of 59 of them, and on personal visits to Children's Courts. It tests a number of theses against these studies. The basic fact found was that girls from single parent, housing commission backgrounds and Aboriginal girls are disproportionately fast-tracked from social deprivation into custodial and other punitive situations. State wards were found to comprise one-fifth of girls processed by Children's Courts.

Chapter 2, 'Feminist Readings of Female Delinquency', tests these facts against simplistic theories of sexism and racial bias in the system. Girls were found not to be dealt with more harshly than boys and not to be highly represented in welfare matters, but welfare matters were more harshly dealt with than criminal matters and boys were much more highly represented in criminal matters.

The issue here is not the sexualisation of female delinquency but the blurring of care with control, of welfare and justice and the inversion of discourses of blame which make the victim (in this case the abused child) the guilty party.

*Offending Girls* also deals with the over-representation of Aboriginal girls – 'the visibility of otherness and the invisibility of criminalisation' – and examines 'how the mechanisms of juvenile justice translate otherness, at school, in families and at play, into evidence of delinquency and family dysfunction'. Chapter 4, for example, is concerned primarily with the ways in which truanting from a compulsory school system, often for reasons which may include family pressures to care for relatives or reasons of racial intolerance or economic irrelevance, brings under scrutiny not only school behaviour but other behaviour and ends in concern for lack of education being converted into punitive responses including custody. At the same time this enables educational authorities to avoid their responsibilities.