

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.

'Policing the Families of Delinquent Girls', Chapter 5, is concerned not with the police, but with the way in which welfare authorities have controlled 'problem' families through child removal. Acknowledging subsequent change, Carrington comments on the more recent growth of concepts of 'child protection' and some of the dangers of (inadequately resourced) mandatory reporting laws. The points being made are summarised at the end of the chapter: 'child abuse, juvenile delinquency, truancy and parental incompetence provide socially acceptable routes for state intervention . . . [T]he autonomy of the family comes to depend not on legal rights, but on competence'.

Throughout *Offending Girls*, sociological theory centred on gender, class and race, is tested against a review of the history of a small number of the girls studied in depth. Generalised theory based on statist, patriarchal and capitalist control of the working class young is replaced by a much more sophisticated, multi-centred view. '[T]he debate is . . . about . . . the desirability of different technologies of government of others and their particular consequences for specific categories of youth . . .'

Much of the material in the earlier chapters is pulled together in the longest chapter, 'Sex Youth and Justice: In Her Best Interests'. One of the important insights provided is of the way in which, in these various areas, the often supposed centrality of the courts is replaced by a decentring in which much of effective decision making and discourse is in the hands of others, who are usually bureaucratic and non-accountable. As a judge, I found the most depressing reading to be the statistics on the result of appeals. Given the case histories of the girls concerned, and the way in which difference and social marginality had resulted in minor transgressions being translated into incarceration, the statistics show the reliance of courts on the value judgments of various professionals in other fields.

Of course there have been numerous reports and attempts to reform child welfare and juvenile justice systems in Australia and elsewhere since the time at which the events studied in this book occurred. In the process of decarcerating abused or neglected children mistakes have been made. The need to separate care matters from delinquency matters has, however, been recognised despite the fact that at times a simplistic division between welfare and justice has been adopted in which justice has often been taken as equivalent to punishment. In the

juvenile offending area the needs for due process and to recognise that the child is all too often a victim are frequently still over-looked. Of course, the direction and pace of change vary and I make no comment on the State in which the study originates. In general though, it remains true in Australia that there is a reluctance for governments, police, courts and 'the welfare' to truly look to families, rather than to bureaucracy, as the most appropriate source of strength in the development of children whilst, at the same time recognising that where family abuse or resources do not allow for such support, alternative community-based support systems are critical.

This valuable study would, if read by those who most need to do so, be a useful antidote to some preconceptions still widely held. Unfortunately the attempt to reach a wider audience will not be assisted by what is, at times an obscure 'post-structuralist' use of language. But for those who wish to pursue these issues that should not deter them.

HAL JACKSON

The Honourable Justice Hal Jackson is a District Court Judge in Western Australia.

Femicide: The Politics of Women Killing

edited by Jill Radford and Diana E.H. Russell; Open University Press, 1993; 379 pp; \$32.95 softcover.

As the title suggests, this collection of essays is a feminist exploration of femicide. 'Femicide' is defined inclusively by the editors as encompassing racist killings of black women by white men, the killing of women by their husbands or male intimates, the killing of lesbians by heterosexual men, serial sex killings of women, and even the deliberate transmission of HIV by rapists.

Diana Russell, in her preface to the collection, defines femicide as the killing of women by men 'because they are women'. While this definition is a usefully brief one, its generality leads the editors into this ill-considered introductory statement:

Our argument is that while men are murdered more frequently than women, men are rarely murdered simply because they are men. Even in the rare cases of women killing men it is unlikely that they kill because the victim is male.

In the context of spousal killings this is surely untrue. Women kill their male partners 'because they are men' just as surely as men kill their female partners 'because they are women'. The chief concern of this book, a concern to which Russell's definition clearly points, is the structure of male-female relationships, both on an individual and collective basis, and the way in which that structure contributes to the killing of women by men.

Incidentally, one of the essays in the book, by Jacquelyn C. Campbell, titled 'If I Can't Have You No-one Can' suggests that cases of women killing men may not be 'rare'. Campbell, drawing cases from all the homicides in Dayton, Ohio between 1975 and 1979 finds that of those homicides committed by intimate partners, 28 were committed by men and 29 by women. Campbell goes on to show that in the great majority of cases where men were killed by women, self defence was to varying degrees a factor. Thus Campbell found in the overwhelming majority of cases of spousal killings, the woman was a victim, whether she was the one killed or not.

One of the weaknesses of this book is the tendency of the editors to begin statements with words such as 'statistics show . . .' or 'experts agree . . .' without going on to quote the statistics or the experts directly, although contributions by other authors in the collection go some way towards redressing this.

The essay by Karen Stout, titled 'Intimate Femicide' is a careful study of the correlation between the provision of social services and rates of femicide. The units of analysis in Stout's work are the 50 States of the USA. Not surprisingly, Stout finds a positive correlation between provision of social services to victims and perpetrators of wife battering, and lower rates of femicide.

The editors, Jill Radford and Diana Russell, are based in the UK and USA respectively and, as a collaboration between these two, this volume has limited application to the Australian context, as one would expect. Nevertheless, there is much information, as well as commentary, which is not only of interest to the Australian reader, but universal in its application. The recurring themes in this fairly diverse collection – femicide as a tool of patriarchy, the interaction of racism and sexism, victim blaming, pornography and femicide, and media coverage of femicide – are issues all over the world.