

The first section, *Social Work Practice within a Legal Context*, makes a useful contribution to the interface between legal mandates and ethical applications through a chapter on confidentiality and record keeping that discusses when disclosure is warranted, and the elements of informed consent. Another chapter examines the legislative mandate that empowers the worker to act or not, using administrative law frameworks and notions of natural justice.

Sections 2 and 3, *Practice with Diverse Populations* and *Practice in Diverse Jurisdictions*, cover a wide range of more contemporary fields of practice, such as refugees, mental health, domestic violence, post-adoption practice, consumer debt, social work in schools, elderly people and the Family Court.

In the final section, *Law and Social Work Reconsidered*, the concluding chapters by a barrister and a trained social worker challenge members of the 'caring profession' to see law as a complementary, rather than an antagonistic profession, and to consider the benefits of legal reasoning, the assessment of evidence and rules of procedural fairness, as a better and fairer exercise of social workers' discretion.

This book is an important text for both teaching and practising social work and provides a useful and clinically relevant introduction to how criminal, civil and administrative law interacts with assisting people in a diverse range of practice settings. A major strength of this book is the use of case studies to highlight the legal and ethical dilemmas that social workers face, and their responsibility to respond professionally and competently to legal challenges to their decision-making. Some chapters contain useful tables that describe the relevant legislation and the terminology used in each state of Australia. These helpful additions include mental health legislation, corrections legislation, adoption information legislation, substitute care legislation and domestic violence legislation. Unfortunately, other chapters, such as those describing the Coroners Act and child sexual assault, do not follow this format and only cover the legislation in one state.

This leads onto the only disappointment with this book; that it does not address the relevant legislation and procedures in these settings in a more systematic way. For example, health care issues are dealt with as part of work with the elderly and, briefly, in a chapter on the unexpected death of a child; however, this topic could have been presented in a chapter on its own and included the legal aspects of reproductive technology, assessing competence, and 'do not resuscitate' policies. The layout of different chapters does not follow a consistent format, with some contributors relying on extensive use of case studies, such as working with the elderly, while other chapters do not. Some chapters are more theoretical essays on the rights of a disadvantaged group, say in domestic violence, whereas another chapter is more descriptive in its coverage of the legislation as it relates to a particular group, such as corrections.

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