

Vout, Paul (ed.) *Unconscionable Conduct: The Laws of Australia*. Sydney: Lawbook Co, 2006. lxvi, 572p. ISBN 0455222711 (pbk). \$152.95. *Unconscionable Conduct: The Laws of Australia* draws together the work on unfair dealing from Chapter 35 of *The Laws of Australia* into one portable volume. In six sections, each divided into chapters, the main topics covered include misrepresentation, the notion of unconscionableness, principles of estoppel, duress, undue influence and unconscionable dealing. An analysis of the law, cross-jurisdictional comparisons, extensive case analysis, defences and remedies are included for each topic.

This work provides a useful snapshot of the common law and statute law of unconscionable conduct, drawing from concepts in a wide range of areas such as contract, tort, equity and trade practices. In order to define unconscionable conduct, the work analyses and compares trade practices, consumer credit, fair trading and other legislation from all Australian jurisdictions, as well as analysing the major cases which have contributed to the development of the law in this area.

Authors and editors are acknowledged at the beginning of each topic, along with a currency note for that particular section. The diversity of contributors includes practitioners, judges and scholars whose combined knowledge and experience is impressive in a textbook. A foreword by Justice Michael Kirby is both entertaining and thought-provoking. The topics on misrepresentation, duress and the notion of unconscionableness are current to September

2005, while the topics on unconscionable dealing, estoppel and undue influence are current to June 2005, July 2005 and August 2005 respectively.

Each topic is well laid out, with an easy to read style. The bold-type first sentence of each paragraph, which states a principle of law followed by an explanation in the rest of the paragraph, makes for easy research. Clear instructions for use are provided at the beginning of the book. No doubt due to its encyclopaedic origins, it contains an extensive bibliography and a thorough, clear index. References to legislation, cases, articles and books are listed below each paragraph as well as in the bibliography at the back of the book, allowing the reader to quickly locate the references referred to in the text. Additionally, there are references to various parts of *The Laws of Australia* beyond Chapter 35.

The book is particularly aimed at commercial practitioners, who would find it a useful and readable starting point for research on unconscionable conduct. It would also be useful for academics and students, particularly as a portable part of *The Laws of Australia*, which is normally not able to be borrowed. For those libraries who subscribe to *The Laws of Australia*, this book can be made available for loan and is good for those who prefer to read from hard copy. For libraries with or without *The Laws of Australia*, the book is a useful and cost-effective addition to their text collection.

Colleen Cory

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