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## Book review

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### UNDERSTANDING AUSTRALIAN CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS

*Understanding Australian Construction Contracts* by Professor Ian H Bailey SC and Matthew Bell (Lawbook Co, 2008), 257 pp, \$74.95, ISBN 978 0455 22593 7.

Following Ian Bailey's informative text *Construction Law in Australia* (1998), this jointly written text with Matthew Bell provides an insightful analysis into four of the most commonly used standard Australian construction contracts.

The authors provide a detailed summary of the conditions of four standard construction contracts currently in use in Australia, namely: AS 2124-1992, AS 4000-1997, ABIC MW-1 20003 and PC-1 1998.

The authors explain in the Introduction the difference between the consensus forms AS and ABIC on the one hand, and the Property Council approach on the other.

They point out the need for Australian construction professionals to have at least a working knowledge of a wide range of forms representing a spectrum of risk allocation and procurement models.

The analysis is thorough, comprehensive, and logical. There are well-prepared tables of clause comparisons, a full and helpful index, and logical chapter discussion commencing with the contract documents and working through to practical completion and settlement of disputes. The authors point out that this is a sequence which does not necessarily follow the terminology or structure of any particular contract but approximates the chronological order in which matters might be dealt with during a project.

So that the reader may understand the differences in emphasis and risk allocation between the various contracts, each chapter concludes with a comparative table of the key aspects of each contract, as well as a practical further reading list, which includes detailed references to relevant portions of the major texts and *Dorter & Sharkey*, as well as specific articles dealing with the topic of each chapter.

A feature of the text is the simple introduction to each topic at the commencement of each chapter. For readers coming to deal with Australian construction contracts for the first time, these introductions provide a simply expressed and concise analysis of the issue which is then developed with specific reference to the terms of each contract in the balance of the chapter.

This is a practical and helpful text for those seeking to understand the difference between the major Australian standard forms, and should be a practical and useful addition to the libraries of both principals and contractors, and especially the lawyers who are asked to advise, because the text sets out clearly where the contracts under discussion are similar, as well as pointing out their differences.

For those seeking a more detailed analysis of a particular issue, the further reading lists are an invaluable aid to efficient research.

*Ian Nosworthy*