

## International Commercial Law for Business

by Bruno Zeller; *The Federation Press, Sydney, 1999; 238 pp. plus appendixes; \$35.00 softcover.*

Bruno Zeller's work is prefaced with an important qualification: 'The law of international trade is an enormous area'. Zeller has attempted to set out the main legal aspects of international trade in an accessible and readable format, and in my opinion has largely succeeded in his task. The book is aimed at TAFE students, exporters/importers and university students for whom English is a second language, but it is useful for anyone wanting a basic introduction to commercial law in an international business context.

One slight reservation I have relates to the title 'International Commercial Law for Business' which is perhaps a bit misleading since there is no single international commercial law system, as Zeller acknowledges in his introduction. The book is written in a basic textbook style with learning outcomes at the beginning of each chapter and tutorial questions, extended activities and references at the end. Examples are highlighted by being placed in boxes and distributed at relevant points throughout each chapter. Zeller makes use of two fictional characters, Angus Fraser (an Australian businessman) and Sudiman Sukarno (his Indonesian counterpart) to illustrate various points and provide examples of the law in action.

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the book deal with some of the basic legal principles relevant to international business, namely, the law relating to business enterprises (chapter 1), the law of agency (chapter 2) and the law relating to the sale of goods within Australia (chapter 3). These chapters are quite readable and easy to follow.

Chapters 4-9 deal with those matters relevant to importers and exporters, namely, the Vienna Convention on the International Sale of Goods (chapter 4), transport and customs laws (chapters 5-8) and issues relating to representatives overseas (chapter 9). I had some difficulty with separation of the choice of law discussion from the Vienna Convention and generally found chapter 4 more difficult to follow. The section on Incoterms however was very useful. The book does not

discuss GATT or the WTO although the author acknowledges they play an important role. Some brief commentary in this respect would probably strengthen the work.

With only two chapters of the book left, it is clear at this point that Zeller has chosen to limit himself primarily to a consideration of the law relevant to import/export and not other forms of international business such as licensing or foreign direct investment (although licensing is touched on in the last chapter). This is probably a wise move, given the aims of the book and its target audience. One significant gap however, is the lack of any consideration of international financing arrangements. Chapter 10 deals with the resolution of disputes and international arbitration (the latter of which accounts for about 80% of the chapter). Chapter 11 concerns intellectual property law.

The layout of the book is very good as is the referencing and indexing. Headings throughout the text improve readability and the boxed examples and associated questions give readers an opportunity to assimilate the information provided as they read through the book (although some boxed examples assume knowledge which has not been provided). The tutorial questions are generally very good. In my opinion however, some of the questions contain some out-dated and dare I say, sexist stereotypes. I think fitness for purpose in the international context for example, could be better illustrated than through a tutorial question about a woman's dress not matching her handbag. We are also informed, in the same question, that her boss is wearing the same dress - shock! horror! My only consolation is that at least it wasn't her boss' wife!

Overall I found the book to be very readable and accessible, bar those parts (like the arbitration chapter) which have lengthy excerpts of legislation and rules. While the examples provided and the questions posed throughout the book are very useful, perhaps in a future edition, a section could be provided at the end with suggested

answers so that readers could periodically check their progress.

This book fills a gap - an Australian version of a relatively simple, easy to follow text on the legal aspects of trading across borders. It is a useful and practical reference.

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## Unions in a Contrary World: The Future of the Australian Trade Union Movement

by David Peetz; *Cambridge University Press, 1998; 243 pp; \$34.95 softcover.*

Australia's distinctive government involvement in the regulation of unions, wages and employment has undergone major changes since 1980. The increased influence of economic rationalism from the 1980s has had a profound effect on the Unionisation of Australia. From the 1989 introduction of Voluntary Employment Agreements in Queensland to the tabling of the Commonwealth *Workplace Relations Bill* in 1996, structural changes in the employer/employee relationship have altered the balance of power in industrial relations.

David Peetz's *Unions in a Contrary World* investigates various factors that have influenced the rise and fall of union membership. Using data obtained from numerous Australian surveys Peetz analyses the relationships between employees, employers, unions and a market society. Within this analysis, the structural change of the labour market, changes caused by the Accord, and the future of Australian Unions are considered.

If you are looking for a book that will simply describe the general complexities of union membership in Australia this may not be the book you need. Alternately, if you need a comprehensive and complex statistical analysis of the union movement in Australia in the past two decades read on.