

NOTICES

CONFERENCES

■ The **Public Interest Law Conference** is to be held on 9 and 10 October 1992 at the University of New South Wales. The theme of the conference is legal tactics for promoting objectives of social justice, consumer protection and environmental protection.

Cost is \$100 for lawyers and free for students and other concerned citizens. For registration and program details contact:

Public Interest Law Conference,
Faculty of Law,
University of NSW,
P.O. Box 1,
Kensington, 2033, NSW
tel. (02) 697 2767

■ The NSW Welfare Rights Centre is holding a series of **Social Security Training Seminars**:

- 8 September: Disability support issues.
- 29 September: DSS appeals — what to do.
- 27 October: The new family payment package.

For more information and bookings, please call Sue Nevin-Taylor at the Welfare Rights Centre, tel. (02) 267 5077.

■ The Centre for Conflict Resolution at Macquarie University is sponsoring **Australia's First National Conference on Mediation**.

The conference will be held at the World Congress Centre, Melbourne on 24 and 25 October 1992. For details: tel. (043) 63 1474, fax (043) 63 1477.

■ The Monash University Department of Social Work is holding a workshop entitled **Working with Offenders** on Friday, 6 November 1992. It aims to present information about alternative approaches to working with offenders.

For information please contact the Office of Continuing Education, tel. (03) 573 2809.

■ The Australian Institute of Criminology is organising the following conferences:

22—24 September — **National Conference on Juvenile Justice** (Adelaide).

27—29 October — **Without Consent: Confronting Sexual Violence** (Sydney).

30 November—2 December — **Privatisation in the Criminal Justice System** (Wellington, New Zealand).

If you are interested in participating in or speaking at any of the conferences please contact:

Conference Unit,
Australian Institute of Criminology,
G.P.O. Box 2944,
Canberra, 2601, ACT
tel. (06) 274 0223; (06) 274 0230

PUBLICATIONS

■ The National Committee on Violence Against Women has produced the following booklets:

Women and Mediation which is designed to assist women to make an informed choice about whether to participate in mediation.

Guidelines for Use if Mediating in Cases Involving Violence Against Women which is designed to assist mediators assessing parties for suitability for mediation or mediating in situations where there has been violence.

Both are available free of charge from the NCVAW Secretariat which is in the Office of the Status of Women, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 3-5 National Circuit, Barton, ACT. tel. (06) 271 5740.

■ The North East Centre Against Sexual Assault has recently completed a research project on sexual assault, homelessness and the law. It examines the experiences of young people who leave home because of sexual assault, and identifies critical gaps in the legal and welfare systems. Copies of the report entitled *Rough Justice* are available from NECASA for \$10. tel. (03) 459 3190 or 458 3120.

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Editor: Brian Simpson

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All Correspondence to:
Editorial Co-ordinator,
Alternative Law Journal, C/-
Law Faculty, Monash University,
Clayton, Vic. 3168.
Ph. (03) 544 0974.
Fax: (03) 565 5305

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■ The Police Issues Working Group of the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria) Inc. has recently released a report entitled *Who's In Control? Victoria Police Expenditure*. The report is a detailed analysis of the growth in police expenditure. It looks at the relationship between the police and the media, the increasing politicisation of the Victoria Police, the role of the police in the law and order debate and the costs to the community of the growth in police budgets.

▶ For a copy of the report please contact Donna Swan at the Federation of Community Legal Centres on (03) 419 2752.

NEW GROUPS

■ A Victorian Branch of the Australian and New Zealand Education Law Association, the first national association to deal with laws relating only to education, has been formed. ANZELA aims to promote and encour-

age research, study, discussion, writing and dissemination of information about education law issues. The association also aims to develop policies on education law. Further information maybe obtained from:

Ken Dare tel. (03) 628 3800
Damian Walsh tel. (03) 479 2469
Vernita Zigouras tel. (03) 546 3233.

■ A group has been formed by members of the Victorian Council of Social Services, the Federation of Community Legal Centres (Vic.), the Trades Hall Council and the Consumers Advocacy and Financial Counsellors Association to lobby the Attorney-General's Department to change the new parking fines system in Victoria. The new system, introduced in July 1991 has all parking fines and some traffic fines processed through the PERIN 'computerised' court, where no magistrate sits in judgment and all are forced to pay or go to gaol. The group argues that this discriminates against low income earners as it pre-

sents no alternative payment method. It recommends that such offences be transferred to the usual Magistrates Court and that an income-related scale of fines be considered.

If you would like to become involved, please call Shelley Burchfield at the Coburg Legal Service tel. (03) 350 4555.

■ **Legal Hawk** is the plain English wing of the Law Reform Commission of Victoria. It is a consultancy service offering writing, editing, and training workshops to help clients achieve clear, unambiguous documents. Services include: rewriting existing legal documents, standard letters and forms, drafting new documents, reviewing clients' own plain English documents, training in creating user-friendly documents, effective letter writing and more.

For more information contact: Christopher Balmford, tel. (03) 670 3554.

LETTER

Dear Editor,

I endorse the reviewer's comments on the quality of the production of the opera *Jenufa* reviewed in your last issue.

The Australian Opera followed *Jenufa* with a wonderful production of Beethoven's only opera *Fidelio*. This opera is set in a prison and deals with the fate of a political prisoner, Florestan, and a plot by the prison Governor to kill him, with a bit of romance on the side.

Fidelio has been described as an 'ode to the nobility of soul and the dignity of man' and one scene of prisoners emerging into the sunlight singing 'Oh what joy, what joy in the free air to draw one's breath with ease', brought me to tears. After being beset by censorship difficulties *Fidelio* was first performed in Vienna on 20 November 1805, the audience consisting almost entirely of French

troops as Napoleon's Army had just captured the city. It lasted three nights.

In a scene unlikely to be repeated in New South Wales prisons, *Fidelio* finishes with the Minister for Prisons arriving at the gaol recognising the injustices that have occurred and freeing the prisoners and punishing the governor.

By the time this is published, the Australian Opera will have commenced its other productions for the year. If they are as good as *Jenufa* and *Fidelio* they will be worth seeing and thinking about.

Puccini's *Tosca* deals with sadistic and corrupt police and ends with the death of all three principals. Political plotting and assassination is the story behind Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*.

As well as enjoying a good production, opera needs to be looked at against the backdrop of European

political movements of the time. As one Italian composer said: 'The phenomenon that is Verdi is unimaginable without the Risorgimento'.

As an afterthought: on the night I attended *Fidelio* I thought there might be a thesis topic in the subject of Republicans and Opera Goers.

Just prior to the start, the New South Wales Governor, accompanied by others including the New South Wales Opposition leader, entered the opera theatre to take their seats, to the tune of a Vice-Regal musical fanfare of some sort. I looked around: the audience stood, I stood, my companion stood, two visiting Germans next to us stood; the only exceptions were two people sitting up high in one of those boxes once the preserve of the nobility.

Peter Wilmschurst
Sydney