

UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENTS ON THE COMMONWEALTH LAW BULLETIN

Paper by the Commonwealth Secretariat

BACKGROUND

1. *The Commonwealth Law Bulletin*, first published in 1974, is the flagship publication of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Division (LCAD). A comprehensive periodical of the law and legal affairs, *The Bulletin* provides essential reading for judges, Attorneys General, Law Ministers, law reform agencies, academics and private practitioners and others who must keep abreast of the law and legal developments. *The Bulletin* also helps foster harmonised approaches to emerging legal issues throughout the Commonwealth. In a legal literature environment that is increasingly geared towards specialist concerns, *The Bulletin* stands out as a unique publication and is widely read and often referred to by the Commonwealth legal community.
2. Intended to serve as a one-stop reference manual, *The Bulletin* has proved to be indispensable for legal research, particularly in jurisdictions where a wide range of Commonwealth legal journals are unavailable. *The Bulletin* also fills a gap in many countries whose legal systems are based on common law precedent but lack the necessary jurisprudence on particular topics.

IMPORTANT CHANGES IMPLEMENTED IN 2005

3. LCAD is committed to the production and publication of a respected and timely law journal and in 2005 significant changes were introduced to improve the publication process and make *The Bulletin* more relevant, engaging and thought-provoking.
4. Beginning with the first issue of 2005 (Vol 31 No 1), publishing responsibilities were taken over by Cavendish Publishing Limited (Cavendish) the well-known legal publishers, who are also responsible for printing and marketing. LCAD will continue to select material for publication in *The Bulletin* and provide these materials to Cavendish for processing. Cavendish will endeavour to publish *The Bulletin* within three months from receipt of manuscripts.
5. Cavendish also ensures that *The Bulletin* is properly recorded with the various national and international bibliographic agencies. They make extracts from each issue of *The Bulletin* available to all relevant information brokers and digitalise the contents so that the electronic version is also available online. Cavendish market *The Bulletin* nationally and internationally to all potential subscribers.
6. *The Bulletin* has now returned to its traditional publication schedule of four issues per year and it is anticipated that each edition will consist of approximately 200-250 pages. Roughly half of each edition is devoted to scholarly legal research on a variety of Commonwealth legal topics and international developments, while the other half of the journal consists of recent Commonwealth legal decisions, law reform reports and legislation. To help attract potential new writers to *The Bulletin*, the Commonwealth Secretariat's website now includes a call for submissions of legal writing and the journal's Guidelines for Authors can also be found online.
7. The year 2005 also saw a major push to produce all back issues of *The Bulletin* that remained outstanding up to 2005. Out of 800 printed copies, 450 are mailed to paid subscribers and the balance provided free of charge to member states. The Secretariat's Communications and Public

Affairs Division (CPAD) will continue to be responsible for mailing *The Bulletin* to current subscribers, a procedure which it has outsourced to a third party.

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

8. To help provide guidance to *The Bulletin*, an Editorial Advisory Board was established consisting of eminent legal scholars from around the Commonwealth. The Board will essentially provide direction for *The Bulletin's* development. Amongst other things, it is mandated to identify significant legal developments throughout the Commonwealth, help secure potential contributors of scholarly articles for the journal and highlight new laws and important legal decisions of their respective jurisdictions for possible inclusion in *The Bulletin*. The Board also has the right to conduct regular reviews of *The Bulletin* and make recommendations as appropriate.

CONCLUSION

9. The future looks bright for *The Bulletin*. A new and contemporary-looking layout and cover have been developed by Cavendish, who are now responsible for production and marketing of the journal. A pool of scholarly legal writers from around the Commonwealth is currently being developed. Electronic versions of Commonwealth judicial decisions and law reform agency reports are being secured, thereby ensuring accurate and timely publication of these materials.

10. Implementation of these measures has often been time consuming and complex. Nevertheless, LCAD is confident that the changes are absolutely essential to enhance and build upon *The Bulletin's* reputation as a strong voice on Commonwealth legal affairs.