Some 60 years ago the "tyranny of distance" was first used to describe the effect of our geographical remoteness from our colonial forebears and the unique development of Australia (Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History* (1966)). Interestingly, this phrase is also indicative of a habit of thinking about place; that is, by reference to somewhere else, rather than the place itself. An overriding message of this collection is that the "tyranny of distance" continues to impose burdens on RRR communities, including the failure to deliver structures and resourcing to ensure equal access to justice for RRR Australia. While we allow "rural communities [to remain] imagined communities", devoid of specific data, community input and control, we will continue to fail to deliver equal justice to the members of those communities. This collection makes an important contribution by replacing imagined rural communities with real information, and identifying the gaps in our knowledge of these communities.

Hon Wayne Martin AC
Chief Justice of Western Australia

WHISPERS FROM THE BUSH

Whispers from the Bush, by Skye Saunders, Federation Press, Sydney, 2015, 240 pages: ISBN 9781760020385. Softcover $59.95.

This book makes two original contributions to an understanding of the factors that contribute to sexual harassment in rural workplaces – first, it presents original data from interviews with rural employees and employers, and secondly, it draws a number of trends from a comparative analysis of workplace sexual harassment cases in rural and urban Australia.

The opening chapters present a brief introduction to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth). The author notes recent developments such as changes to s 28 in 2011 lowering the threshold for sexual harassment to whether a reasonable person would have anticipated the *possibility* that the person harassed might be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

While both the interview and case analysis sample sizes (107 interviewees and 57 urban/ 11 rural sexual harassment cases) are perhaps too small to draw conclusions (as Dr Saunders concedes), the comparative case analysis reveals some interesting trends. A higher proportion of rural workplace sexual harassment cases involve multiple types of alleged harassment and alleged offenders in senior positions. In rural cases, there is a greater tendency for reference to be made to the promptness of reporting on behalf of the complainant, suggesting that immediate disclosure correlates with credibility. Further, a higher proportion of rural employers are found vicariously liable for sexual harassment in the workplace – perhaps attributable to lower standards of policies and procedures among rural employers.

Based on her findings, Dr Saunders questions the reach and effectiveness of laws such as the *Sex Discrimination Act* in rural Australia and recommends that the law be "translated" into plain English to enable rural men to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable workplace behaviour. One criticism that might be made of the book is that the book itself uses slightly inaccessible terminology ("doubly masculinised", "homosocial interaction", etc). However, it is certainly an interesting read for lawyers practising in employment and discrimination law.

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