

**FORUM#****SEXUAL ASSAULT AND THE LAW****FOREWORD**

CLAIRE BOURKE\*

Legal responses to sexual assault invariably generate heated debate. Last year, the New South Wales Attorney-General, Bob Debus, established a Sex Offences Taskforce to consider these issues. It is anticipated that the Taskforce's final recommendations will lead to significant reforms in the area.

This *Forum* brings together a collection of perspectives on the often problematic interaction between sexual assault and the legal system. Practitioners and academics share their thoughts on the difficulties of balancing the rights of victims and the accused; the need to ensure appropriate court procedures and evidence laws; issues surrounding popular conceptions of victims and offenders; and recent reconsiderations of attitudes towards sexual assault, both internationally and domestically.

What clearly emerges from these articles is the need to deal with sexual assault in a way that acknowledges the legal rights of all parties, while also addressing deeper attitudes in society. There are limits to the ways in which the law can respond to this crime and it is important to remember that law reform is only part of the solution.

I sincerely thank the authors in this *Forum* for their varied and thoughtful contributions. In particular, I would like to thank Dorne Boniface of the University of New South Wales, who always gave generously of her time and expertise. In addition, many thanks to the *Journal's* faculty advisers and the 2005 Editorial Board, for their tireless attention to footnotes.

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