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This dictionary, now in its eighth edition, has been written by a distinguished team of academic and practising lawyers. With its easy-to-use format and emphasis on accessible language, it is designed to meet the needs of four main categories of reader:

- legal professionals, who sometimes need a quick, portable, and reliable reference source;
- students following law courses at all levels, who require clear explanations of legal concepts and terminology;
- professionals in other fields (e.g. business people, local government officers, accountants, and social workers), who require some knowledge of the law in their work;
- laypeople who are affected by the law as homebuyers, consumers, motorists, and employees and in various aspects of family life (e.g. divorce, inheritance).

Each article begins with a clear definition of the entry word (or words) which, in most cases, is followed by a more detailed explanation or description of the concepts involved. Legal jargon is avoided wherever possible.

This new edition reflects many recent changes in the law and legal system. If any provisions of new legislation were not in force at the time of publication, the entries to which they apply will indicate the direction of the proposed changes. The growing importance of European law, international law, and human rights law has been recognized in the updating of the text.

References to important new cases, with full citations, have likewise been added wherever this seems particularly relevant. These will be particularly valuable to law students but, owing to the ready availability of case-law materials online, can be followed up quite easily by those who have no access to a law library. An introduction to the legal resources now available on the Internet is another important feature of this edition (see Appendix II). There is also a centre section aimed specifically at students; the Writing and Citation Guide provides detailed advice on how to write and present essays on legal subjects.

An asterisk (*) placed before a word in a definition indicates that additional relevant information will be found under this article. Some entries simply refer the reader to another entry, indicating either that they are synonyms or abbreviations or that they are most conveniently explained in one of the dictionary's longer articles. Finally, the use of the pronoun "he" (rather than "he or she") in entries has been adopted purely to simplify the construction of sentences; it does not imply that the subject matter relates exclusively or primarily to males.

J.L.

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