

Environmental Law by Stuart Bell, Donald McGillivray, Ole Pedersen, Emma Lees, and Elen Stokes
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Bell et al's 10th edition of *Environmental Law* has proven to have been worth the 7 year wait and is sure to become a staple in environmental law classrooms given its learning benefits.

Firstly, Bell et al provide the most up-to-date textbook on the market, as evidenced through the sources included in this edition. For example, recent legislative developments, such as the Environment Act 2021, are examined, as well as recent case law, including the 2023 Supreme Court decision on private nuisance in *Fearn v Board of Trustees of the Tate Gallery*, and the 2020 Supreme Court ruling on climate change in *R (Friends of the Earth) v Heathrow Airport*. However, some contemporary content has been overlooked, including reference to the ongoing Plastic Treaty negotiations, which is due to be enforced later this year. As the treaty will significantly reform plastic regulation, students would have greatly benefitted from its inclusion to aid their critical understanding of how this field is changing.

Secondly, the textbook has reduced since its previous edition, going from 872 to 696 pages, thereby providing a "more slimmed-down edition" in comparison to Fisher et al's 888-page textbook. But do not let this deceive you into thinking that it now fails to cover core environmental law. Within its 21 chapters, Bell et al provide a comprehensive and foundational understanding of all key topics that I teach, chapters which are structured to allow students to progress through this vast subject in a clear and logical manner; it first builds student knowledge on what environmental law is, before using such foundational knowledge to delve into specific environmental harms, including climate change, regulation, planning law, biodiversity protection, water pollution, and air pollution, a chapter which is new to this edition.

Given its reduced content, it is not surprising that a greater depth of critical discussion is needed in places to encourage students to critically engage with the topics covered. For example, renowned debates, including how we should use regulatory tools and the adequacy of the Paris Agreement on climate change, are only touched upon, despite the vast scholarship on these debates. Bell et al acknowledge this limit of their textbook, and consequently direct readers to Fisher et al's in-depth analysis of such core debates instead; "to explore the topics we don't [...], we recommend, in particular, the excellent Fisher et al." In future editions, it would be great to see these debates expanded upon in Bell et al's work to provide students with a single, comprehensive textbook they can rely on for all of their learning needs.

Nevertheless, Bell et al's 10th edition does encourage the development of critical analysis through other means; its critical reflection points require students to analyse "whether, and how, the law is enforced". For example, when discussing water pollution, students are asked to stop and consider whether legal reform would be "welcomed" here and asks "what might the advantages and disadvantages be?" of doing so. This technique provides a significant learning tool by encouraging students to not simply copy from the textbook, but to critically analyse the content they are reading and learning; it allows students to go beyond surface learning by encouraging active learning instead.

The ability of Bell et al to enhance student learning is further shown through the textbook's use of 'learning objectives' at the start of each chapter, a feature that Fisher et al's textbook does not offer. For example, the chapter on regulation begins with a textbox which states "by the end of this chapter,

you should be able to: appreciate the main arguments for and against the use of different regulatory tools". This is an innovative way to allow students to self-assess whether they have developed the required knowledge and skills in each topic, and thus encourages them to revisit and enhance their learning if learning objectives have not been met, a feature which will be equally welcomed by teachers; it demonstrates the knowledge and skills we should be helping our students to attain.

Lastly, Bell et al are to be commended for their textbook's ability to support assessment preparation, the most important element of learning from the student perspective. Not only does the textbook's use of figures, tables, and textboxes allow students to clearly identify "important legal concepts and terminology" to revise, but Bell et al continue to provide students with practice questions at the end of each chapter "to help develop [their] analytical and problem-solving skills and give [them] an opportunity to put [their] knowledge to the test". These questions mimic the type of assessments used in environmental law teaching in practice, including essay-style questions on climate change, such as "provide a critical analysis of the latest international agreement on climate change", and problem questions on more practical topics, including planning law, problem-style questions which Fisher et al do not provide in their textbook. Not only are these questions useful in providing teachers with example questions that we may wish to use in our own seminars, but they are particularly valuable in encouraging active learning by allowing students to learn by doing; as opposed to simply memorising content, students are encouraged to apply their knowledge, and develop their assessment skills, a formative activity renowned for its pedagogical benefits.

To further support student learning here, the answers to the practice questions could also be provided to allow students to self-assess their performance, and would provide them with a blueprint of what a 'good' answer is to aid their learning. Likewise, although some assessment advice is provided in the preface, it would be particularly beneficial to have such advice interspersed and clearly signposted throughout each chapter to guide students on how to revise a particular topic, and how to prepare for an assessment on a given subject, a change which one hopes to see in future editions.

All in all, Bell et al's 10th edition was undoubtedly "designed to support [...] learning" and will accordingly be recommended as the core textbook in my teaching moving forwards.

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