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Mock Trial Competition Case Materials

Round 3 - 2023

Black v Cullen

As at 18 May 2023

Premium Partners





Government of Western Australia
Department of Justice

Student Access Partner

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WA Law School Partners







Black v Cullen

Introduction

This is a civil case in the District Court of Western Australia in which the plaintiff seeks an injunction and an award of damages against the defendant who, it is alleged is guilty of nuisance. The plaintiff claims that they have suffered loss and damage by reason of the defendant's malicious and unreasonable acts of annoyance. The defendant denies the claim of nuisance. In a counterclaim the defendant, in turn, seeks an award of damages against the plaintiff for nuisance, a claim the plaintiff, in turn, denies.

Assumptions to be made in the Case (by student teams and judges)

For the purpose of this mock trial, students and judges are required to assume that:

- It should be assumed that there are no Council by-laws or other laws concerning the approved use of the subject properties;
- If liability is found for a claim in nuisance for either the plaintiff or the defendant, damages are to be awarded. Reasonable foreseeability of damages is not an issue in this trial.
- All relevant documents have been properly served and filed within the relevant time period.

Case Materials

The Plaintiff and Defendant teams each receive the same copy of these Case Materials which includes:

- 1. Legal Notes;
- 2. Statement of Claim filed by Jacob Black (the Plaintiff);
- 3. Defence and Counterclaim filed by Edward Cullen (the Defendant);
- 4. Reply and Defence to Counterclaim filed by Jacob Black (the Plaintiff);
- 5. Statement made by Jacob Black, (the Plaintiff);
- 6. Statement made by Leah Clearwater, (Witness for the Plaintiff);
- 7. Statement made by Edward Cullen, (the Defendant);
- 8. Statement made by Rosalie Hale, (Witness for the Defendant); and
- 9. Copy of the Halloween Party Invitation.

Tips for Student Teams

Please note:

- The above outline is also the order of appearance of each witness.
- the gender of each witness is fixed in order to avoid difficulties in references to "he/she" etc. Students playing the part of a witness are to adopt the role of male or female as indicated above.
- Remember to sign post for the benefit of the judge where you are going with your submissions, so the mock trial judge understands the relevance of what you are saying to your case before you launch into detail about them.
- In your Closings, remember to explain how the evidence <u>as it played out</u> <u>during the mock trial</u> either supported or did not support the finding you are submitting the Court should make.
- Have the main points of your closings prepared in dot point form ahead of trial but make sure your actual closing submissions responds to how the evidence actually played out verbally during trial and how it relates to your case theory.
- If you are tendering an exhibit, remember to have a hard copy with you for the witness and another copy for the judge and the other side.

Legal Notes

Please note that for the purpose of the Competition the "law" is as contained in this section of the Case Materials and the <u>Manual</u> and is the only matter of law to be relied on.

Mock trial judges, coaches and student teams please note that:

- The "law" in these Case Materials has been simplified and adapted to facilitate the Competition meeting its educational objectives.
- The focus of the mock trial is on advocacy skills and forensic analysis not on substantive knowledge of the law itself.
- For this reason, it is expected and required that students do not go beyond the legal notes in these case materials or the Manual when presenting their arguments in the mock trial.

Summary - Tort of Nuisance

The tort of nuisance has been defined as condition or activity which unduly interferes with the use or enjoyment of land. The annoyance, discomfort or interference must be substantial and unreasonable. The task is to weigh the utility of the defendant's activity against the inconvenience caused to others.

In a case of nuisance, the question to be answered is - is the defendant using their property unreasonably having regard to the fact they have a neighbour?

Relevant Case Law

In *Walter v Selfe* (1851) 64 ER 849 at 851: "In order to be "actionable nuisance", there must be an inconvenience materially interfering with the ordinary comfort physically of human existence, not merely according to elegant and dainty habits of living but according to the plain and sober notions among our people."

In *Feiner v Domachuk* (SCNSW), unreported, 27 April 1994 per Young J at 3: This is a nuisance case brought by one neighbour against another. The test that one applies in this sort of case is completely clear, though it will be a matter of fact at the final hearing whether the defendant's activities mean that they are liable under that test. The test is laid down by Lindley LJ in *Rapier v London Tramways Co* [1983] 2 Ch 588, 600, that one must look to the common sense of ordinary people and:

"the test is whether the smell is so bad and continuous as to seriously interfere with comfort and enjoyment."

In that case Justice Young found that in a farming district it is to be acknowledged that there will always be a certain amount of discomfort due to smells but that, if shown on the facts, even in a farming community "one does get to the stage where a smell becomes too much".

In *Raciti v Hughes* (SCNSW), unreported, 19 October 1995 per Young J: In this case the defendants had installed on their property floodlights and camera surveillance equipment. The floodlights and surveillance equipment are so positioned that they respectively illuminate the plaintiff's backyard and may record on video tape what occurs in the plaintiff's backyard. The plaintiff brought an action in nuisance. In Noyes v Huron and Erie Mortgage CorD [1932] OR 426, Wright, J in the Supreme Court of Ontario held that there was no nuisance where a floodlight deleteriously affected the plaintiff's advertising signs. However, when one reads the judgment carefully one can see this is not because he found that lights could not constitute a nuisance, but rather because he found in that case that there was no sensible or material damage done by reason of the lights, on the evidence before him. At 429 he described it as a slight interference." (at 3) Justice Young quoted an Essay in the American Law Reports (Volume 5, 2nd Series, Page 90):

"The private nuisance light cases, considered as a whole, seem to warrant the generalisation that if the intensity of light shining from adjoining land is strong enough to seriously disturb a person of ordinary sensibilities, or interfere with an occupation which is no more than ordinarily susceptible to light, it is a nuisance; if not, there is no cause of action." (at 4)

In Campbelltown Golf Club Ltd v Winton and Anor (NSWCA), unreported, 23 June 1998 per Sheller, Powell JJA and Sheppard AJA: In this case the respondents purchased property adjacent to a golf club and built a house on the land. After moving into the house they noticed that, quite frequently, golf balls were hit onto their property at times causing damage.

Sheppard AJA (with whom Sheller and Powell JJA agreed):

"the submission upon which the golf course relied really brought into play the suggestion that the respondents should not recover as much as they otherwise might have done because they came to the nuisance. It is clear, of course, that it is no defence to an action for nuisance that the plaintiff came to it" (at 5).

In *Hollywood Silver Fox Farm, Limited v Emmett* [1936] 2 KB 468 at 475 per Macnaghten J Citing *Christie v Davey* [1893] 1 Ch 316 at 326 per North J:

"In my opinion the noises which were made in the defendant's house were not of a legitimate kind. They were what, ... 'ought to be regarded as excessive and unreasonable'. I am satisfied that they were made deliberately and maliciously for the purpose of annoying the plaintiffs." Then come the significant words: "If what has taken place had occurred between two sets of persons both perfectly innocent, I should have taken an entirely different view of the case. But I am persuaded that what was done by the defendant was done only for the purpose of annoyance, and in my opinion it was not a legitimate use of the defendant's house to use it for the purpose of vexing and annoying his neighbours."

Use by the Plaintiff of their own land in a manner that foreseeably increases exposure to nuisance is no defence except where such case introduced an element of "abnormal sensibilities."

In Halsey v Esso Petroleum Co Ltd [1961] 2 ALL ER 145 per Veale J at 151:

"It is always a question of degree whether the interference with comfort or convenience is sufficiently serious to constitute a nuisance. The character of the neighbourhood is very relevant and all the relevant circumstances have been taken into account. What might be a nuisance in one area is by no means necessarily so in another. In an urban area, everyone must put up with a certain amount of discomfort and annoyance from the activities of neighbours, and the law must strike a fair and reasonable balance between the right of the plaintiff on the one hand to the undisturbed enjoyment of his property, and the right of the defendant on the other hand to use his property for his own lawful enjoyment ... It is the standard of the ordinary man."

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA B E T W E E N

CIV 1234 of 2023

JACOB BLACK

and

EDWARD CULLEN

Defendant

Plaintiff

STATEMENT OF CLAIM FILED PURSUANT TO WRIT ISSUED ON 8 JANUARY 2023

Date of Document: 29 January 2023

Filed on Behalf of: The Plaintiff

Date of Filing: 30 January 2023

Prepared by:

Uley & Co 120 Washington Ave PERTH WA 6000 Telephone: 08 620 4600 Reference No: 666

- The Plaintiff is and was at all material times the owner and occupier of property known as 5-7 Quiluete Street, Lapush (**Plaintiff's Property**).
- 2 The Defendant is and was at all material times the owner and occupier of property known as 3 Quiluete Street, Lapush (Defendant's Property).
- 3 At all material times the Plaintiff's Property was used for two purposes, namely, as residential property and for the breeding of Saarloos Wolf dogs.
- 4 Between 1 February 2020 and 7 January 2023 the Defendant held or allowed gatherings of persons at the Defendant's Property. During such gatherings the Defendant
 - a) caused flood lighting to light up all or part of the Plaintiff's Property;
 - b) caused smoke to emanate onto part or all of the Plaintiff's Property; and/or
 - c) caused loud music.

("wrongful acts")

5	Such wrongful acts were caused intentionally and/or maliciously.
6	As a result of the said wrongful acts the Plaintiff's lawful use and enjoyment of property has been unreasonably impaired.
	Particulars
	(a) personal discomfort and annoyance;
	(b) disrupted dog breeding cycles; and
	(c) loss of saleable progeny.
	AND THE PLAINTIFF CLAIMS
	(a) An injunction restraining the Defendant from continuing with the wrongful acts;
	(b) Damages in the amount of \$30,000.00;
	(c) Interest at the rate of 6% pursuant to section 32 of the Supreme Court Act (WA) 1935;
	(d) Costs.
	Counsel for the Plaintiff

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA B E T W E E N

CIV 1234 of 2023

JACOB BLACK

Plaintiff

and

EDWARD CULLEN

Defendant

and

EDWARD CULLEN

Plaintiff by Counterclaim

and

JACOB BLACK

Defendant by Counterclaim

DEFENCE AND COUNTERCLAIM

Date of Document: 10 February 2023 Filed on Behalf of: The Defendant Date of Filing: 11 February 2023

Prepared by:

J Jenks & Associates 200 Seattle Drive PERTH WA 6000 Telephone: 08 695 4123 Reference No: 0101

- 1 The Defendant admits paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of the Statement of Claim.
- 2 The Defendant admits that at times between 1 February 2020 and 7 January 2023 the Defendant did hold gatherings of persons on the Defendant's Property and that during such gatherings the Defendant made use of:
 - (a) floodlights;
 - (b) a bon fire and/or a barbecue; and
 - (c) music.

The Defendant otherwise denies paragraph 4 of the Statement of Claim.

- 3 The Defendant denies paragraph 5 of the Statement of Claim.
- 4 The Defendant denies paragraph 6 of the Statement of Claim and further denies that the acts were substantial and unreasonable such as to cause interference with the Plaintiff's lawful use and enjoyment of property.
- 5 It is denied that the Plaintiff is entitled to the relief claimed or any relief, for the reasons alleged or at all.

COUNTERCLAIM

- 6 Between 1 July 2019 and 7 January 2023 the Plaintiff's Property has been used for the purpose of breeding Saarloos Wolf dogs.
- 7 At all material times the Plaintiff's Property has been kept in a state such that:
 - (a) smells and odours emanated onto the Defendant's Property; and
 - (b) the Plaintiff's dogs bark constantly.

("wrongful acts")

- 8 These wrongful acts are caused intentionally and/or maliciously.
- 9 As a result of these wrongful acts the Defendant's lawful use and enjoyment of property has been unreasonably impaired.

AND THE DEFENDANT CLAIMS:

Damages;

Act (WA) 1935;

(a)

(b)	Interest at the rate of 6% pursuant to section 32 of the Supreme Court

(c)	Costs.	
		Counsel for the Defendan

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BETWEEN JACOB BLACK

CIV 1234 of 2023

Plaintiff

and

EDWARD CULLEN

Defendant

and

EDWARD CULLEN

Plaintiff by Counterclaim

and

JACOB BLACK

Defendant by Counterclaim

REPLY AND DEFENCE TO COUNTERCLAIM

Date of Document: 15 February 2023

Filed on Behalf of: The Plaintiff

Date of Filing: 15 February 2023

Prepared by:

Uley & CoTelephone: 08 620 4600120 Washington AveReference No: 666PERTH WA 6000Reference No: 660

Reply

The Plaintiff joins issue with the Defendant on the Defendant's defence save where the Defendant's defence consists of admissions.

Defence to Counterclaim

- 2 The Defendant by counterclaim admits paragraph 6 of the counterclaim.
- 3 The Defendant by counterclaim denies paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 of the counterclaim.
- 4 It is denied that the Plaintiff by counterclaim is entitled to the relief claimed or any relief, for the reasons alleged or at all.

Counsel for the Defendant by Counterclaim

OF JACOB BLACK First Witness for the Plaintiff

I, JACOB BLACK of 5-7 Quiluete Street, Lapush, Professional Dog Breeder, state as follows:

- 1 I am 36 years old and live at 5-7 Quiluete Street, Lapush. It is a really quiet semi-rural area.
- I have been breeding Saarloos Wolf dogs for seven years. At first it was just a hobby but five years ago I became a professional breeder. I brought the property because Saarloos Wolf dogs won't breed unless there is peace and quiet and they feel safe.
- Quiluete Street used to be a really nice area until July 2019 when Edward Cullen and then his family moved in next door. Since they moved in Edward has been having loud raging parties all night nearly every weekend. There is always really loud music and smoke and bright lights. It is as if half the town is invited. Edward has never invited me but I wouldn't go even if I had been invited. Edward doesn't like me and I know he and his friends are deliberately trying to upset me and my dog breeding.
- 4 Since Edward moved next door it has been more difficult than usual to get the female wolfdogs to fall pregnant. I have about twenty wolf dogs; fifteen of them are breeding females.
- Just before Edward moved next door eight of my breeding females fell pregnant. Only

two of them had trouble free deliveries. Three of the wolf dogs had difficult births and the other three gave birth to a mix of live and still births. All up I lost about eight pups. The vet said to me: "your dogs are having difficult pregnancies because they have become distressed."

- The last straw was when my best breeding female "Sascha" miscarried with eight pups.

 Sascha only had a week to go until full-term when the miscarriage occurred on 31 October 2022 when Edward had a Halloween's Party.
- There was the usual setup. There were floodlights lighting up their backyard as well as my backyard, party lights, really loud music and a giant bonfire and old-fashioned barbeque. At one stage Edward, or maybe his sister Rosalie Hale, must have done something because there was thick smoke, it even came into our house which has airconditioning.
- The smoke happened just after Leah complained to Edward about the music and lights. Leah said to me: "I asked Edward to turn the music down and reposition the lights because it was upsetting the dogs. I said Sascha could miscarry if she gets too distressed." Edward just laughed.
- 9 Leah is certain Sascha miscarried because of the music, lights and all the smoke.
- 10 I have complained many times to Edward about the music and lights. I have told both

Edward and Rosalie about the effects on the dogs but they don't care. Edward normally just says something like: "Good, I hope it does damage; your dogs stink and bark all the time."

11 Since Edward Cullen moved next door I have lost about sixteen pups. Each pup is worth about \$2,000 so I have lost pups worth about \$30,000. Edward Cullen is doing this on purpose; Edward is deliberately trying to put me out of business and I'm losing sleep and money because of him.

Signed:	
	JACOB BLACK

OF LEAH CLEARWATER SECOND WITNESS FOR THE PLAINTIFF

I, LEAH CLEARWATER of 5-7 Quiluete Street, Lapush, Veterinary Surgeon, state as follows:

- 1 I live at 5-7 Quiluete Street, Lapush with Jacob Black. I am 27 years old.
- I have an Honours degree in Veterinary Science from Murdoch University and a Masters Degree specialising in canines. I have been a veterinary surgeon for about four years now. Because they are so hard to breed I have a real interest in wolf dogs. This is how I got to meet Jacob and ended up living with him.
- Wolf dogs but particularly Saarloos wolf dogs, are prone to miscarry in the later stages of pregnancy if there is excessive noise or light. I've told Edward Cullen and Rosalie Hale this lots of times.
- The first time I told Edward was the morning after their first party back in February 2020. When I told Edward, Edward's friends, who were helping clean up, they just laughed and one of them said: "good, let's make heaps of noise, that's cheap pest control, isn't it?" Edward laughed.
- In about July 2020, when the dogs were about to start breeding, I again told Edward about the damage the excessive lights and music would have on the dogs. Edward just said to me: "those dogs never shut up and

- they always stink. It is better for me if the dogs don't breed."
- Just after Edward moved next door some of the dogs had difficult pregnancies. We lost about eight pups. Then Sascha, our best dog, fell pregnant.
- 7 When Edward had his latest Halloween Party last year I went next door to speak to him about Sascha.
- I said to Edward: "there is a serious risk that Sascha will miscarry if you don't keep the noise and the smoke down. Can you please redirect the lights so they don't shine onto our backyard, turn down the music and if possible could you move the campfire away from our fence?"
- 9 Edward and Rosalie just laughed at me and said: "get lost." Rosalie even said to Edward: "we hope she does miscarry. We don't want any more yappy stinking dogs next door."
- 10 Edward had party lights strewn across the length of his year. After our conversation Rosalie turned them so they were lighting up more of our backyard. That is when Sascha went crazy, she was whining and crying. I could tell she had become very distressed by the lights and noise.
- 11 I then saw Edward throw some green wood onto the bonfire. The smoke was really thick and blew onto our property. I started to cough and it was so bad it even came into the house.

- 12 I think Edward and Rosalie did it on purpose.Later that night Sascha miscarried.
- The next morning I saw Edward and Rosalie and told them that *Sascha miscarried*. Edward laughed at me and said sarcastically: "that's a shame." I heard him say to Rosalie as they were shutting their front door on me "that will show them."
- Our kennels are really large and dogs have heaps of room to exercise. We see the dogs twice a day and give the kennels a thorough cleaning out every weekend in which we hose it all out and wash their bedding. It doesn't smell at all. Being a rural area there are a hobby farms so lot of dogs are in the neighbourhood.
- 15 Since the Cullens moved next door we have had more problems than usual getting the dogs to fall pregnant and then there have only been a few live births. Jacob has missed out on at least fifteen pups at an average of two thousand dollars each. Edward Cullen is deliberately trying to distress the dogs to upset us.

Signed:		
	LEAH CLEARWATER	R

OF EDWARD CULLEN FIRST WITNESS FOR THE DEFENCE

- I, EDWARD CULLEN of 3 Quiluete Street, Lapush, DJ and Musician, state as follows:
- I am 27 years old and I am the owner of 3 Quiluete Street, Lapush. I bought the place in July 2019.
- Since moving in I've had nothing but trouble from my neighbours at 5-7. My neighbours breed giant dogs, like the ones on "Game of Thrones". They must have about thirty adult wolf dogs plus puppies. I saw a Youtube clip about them and in that clip a vet said that it is hard to breed them in Australia due to the heat and because they are deaf. I am surprised they have so many.
- The dogs are kept in small kennels in cramped conditions. I never see Jacob or Leah taking them for walks. The dogs bark all day and night. The kennels stink. You can smell them from a mile away.
- 4 When I first moved in I held a housewarming party. The next day Leah Clearwater spoke to me and said: "We breed dogs. Noise, smoke and lights upset them and we will report you if you ever have loud parties after 10pm." I said to Leah: "We only have a few people over for some music around a campfire, its not a rave or anything. We will make sure no lights shine on the kennels. Your dogs look really cramped. Are they sick? Do they always smell that bad?"

Leah replied: "Our dogs are well looked after. We clean up the kennels every week."

5 I live with my sister Rosalie Hale, her boyfriend as well as my other sister and her partner. We have family gatherings once a month, plus invite friends for parties on special occasions. It is hard people to come over more because next door smells so bad. When we do have a party we put a floodlight in a tree near the fence between the two properties. We point the floodlight towards our house. There is sometimes light on the property next door, when the wind blows the light, but the floodlight is never shining on the kennels. We usually have a barbecue and either have music playing or bring out our guitars. We all play.

We have only had one big party; that was Halloween in 2022. We had about forty people over from the neighbourhood. At about 9:30pm we turned on some lights and a smoke machine to create a spooky atmosphere. We had a band playing live on a make-shift stage.

- We turned off the lights and smoke machine and turned the music down at about 12:30am when everyone started to leave.
- During the evening Leah approached me.

 Leah said: "One of our dogs is heavily pregnant, please move your lights or we will have to call the police."
- 9 I said to Leah: "Relax, the lights and smoke machine will only be on for a short time

Jacob come and join us as we are about to start the barbecue." Leah just stormed off.

- 10 Rosalie accidentally put some damp wood on the campfire which created a lot of smoke. There was a bit of wind so the smoke dispersed pretty quickly.
- The next morning Leah said to me: "Our dog miscarried last night because of you."

 I replied: "I am sorry about your loss." I then jokingly said: "at least you will have less dogs to look after!" She walked off.
- We have occasional parties, but nothing over the top. I have always invited Jacob and Leah to our parties we do a letter box drop and invite all of our neighbours. I produce to the Court a copy of the invitation I sent out. Most of them come, if they can. Jacob and Leah have never come.
- Jacob just wants me to move so that my property can be bought on the cheap and therefore can extend the kennels. Jacob needs to expand because they are so cramped and smelly for such large dogs.

Signed:		
•	EDWARD CILLEN	

OF ROSALIE HALE SECOND WITNESS FOR THE DEFENCE

I, ROSALIE HALE of 3 Quiluete Street, Lapush, Registered Nurse, state as follows:

- I am 26 years old and live at 3 Quiluete Street, Lapush with my brother Edward Cullen. I have lived there since September 2019.
- 2 Quiluete Street is a lovely place to live and it is close to my work. I would be the perfect place to live if it wasn't for the dogs next door. Jacob and Leah have about thirty dogs and breed them. I work odd hours so I leave and get home at different times almost every day.
- 3 Every time I come home there is at least one dog barking next door. I know there are other dogs in the neighbourhood but none of them bark as much as the ones next door. It is constant. It is sometimes so loud we can't hear the television.
- Then there is the smell. Sometimes it is unbearable especially on hot days or if there is a breeze. Occasionally the kennels won't be cleaned for over a week and that is when they really smell.
- We had a house-warming party after I moved in and one of my friends said to me: "Next door reeks. Dogs shouldn't smell that bad. You are going to have problems getting people to come over if that smell continues."
- It was at the house-warming that Jacob said to Edward: "We clean our kennels every week," or something to that effect. I know

that doesn't happen. In about June 2020 I was out in the garden and I heard Leah say: "we should clean out the dogs today but I am too tired" and Jacob replied: "yeah I know, they can go another week, it has never hurt them before."

- Fedward and I have our family around for a barbeque once a month. I put a floodlight in the tree and purposely point it towards our house and away from the dog kennels; once or twice the light has shifted due to the wind and that starts the dogs barking.
- 8 That is the last thing we want, so I take special care in positioning the lights. We also have a barbecue and play some light, usually acoustic, music.
- 9 The only proper party we have had was Halloween 2022. We even had a smoke machine, but only for an hour or so just before midnight to add atmosphere.
- 10 At some stage during the night Leah approached us and demanded the music be turned down and the lights repositioned. Leah said: "our dog could miscarry."
- 11 I didn't understand this last comment.
- 12 Edward then said words to the effect: "OK we will try to reposition the lights and the smoke machine will only be on for a little while. Why don't you join us?" Leah just stormed off. Edward was a bit annoyed they wouldn't accept the invitation so said: "Get lost then" and I said: "Your dogs stink".
- 13 Shortly after this conversation I started the campfire. Edward asked me to throw some more wood on the fire but I accidentally used some which was still damp so there was a

- fair bit of smoke. Luckily it was windy so it dispersed quickly.
- 14 It was a great party, we had the lights and smoke from about 10:00. I turned them all off when everyone started to leave just after midnight.
- Neither Leah nor Jacob has approached me or told me anything about the effects music and lights can have on their dogs.
- It has been really difficult living in Quiluete
 Street because the dogs bark and stink. I
 think when we have parties that Jacob
 agitates the dogs especially so they will
 annoy us and get us to move away.

Signed:	
	ROSALIE HALE



Credits for Case Materials: The Law Society of WA wishes to thank the original authors of these case materials and to the lawyers who volunteered their time to review and update them for use in the Mock Trial Competition. Any feedback in relation to the Case Materials used in this competition should be made to mocktrial@lawsociety.wa.asn.au.



