

**Day 4 – Thursday, 29 November 2007**  
**Parallel Sessions – Session 2A 9.00am-10.30am**

Speaker: Rick Snell

Position: Senior Law Lecturer

Organisation: University of Tasmania, Australia

Presentation Title: FOI and Countries in Transition – off the Shelf Software or Custom Build? The Asian Experience

The rapid spread of countries adopting FOI, especially in the last decade, raises the question of whether there are any country conditions (economical, political or infrastructure) which limit or ought to limit the adoption of FOI? The international pressures (both from NGOs and multilateral organizations) and domestic pressures for further adoption of FOI remain strong. Within the Asian region several countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka) are at various stages of developing FOI laws.

Yet do the political systems, information environments and records management capacity of these countries pose serious or insurmountable difficulties for the effective adoption of FOI regimes? Can the marketing of Best Practice Standards and the pressures to match model laws lead countries to adopt FOI systems that are more dysfunctional, disruptive and likely to under perform than adopting more tailored systems?

The author uses this paper to reflect upon his experiences of the FOI reform process in Asia, in particular a recent 7 week secondment to Cambodia, and developing research that focuses on the relationship between FOI and information management and the wider political environment.