

## **Peter Brock's Legacy: a Panorama of Chaos:**

by Janet Fife-Yeomans

### **Like his love life, Peter Brock's finances veered close to chaos.**

During his racing career, the Bathurst legend was so firmly in control that he could see off any other competitors. But when it came to his personal money matters, Brock preferred to take his hands off the steering wheel.

That's why, more than a year after Brock's death, his "wife" of 28 years Bev, their three children and his lover and fiancée, Julie Bamford, are still wrangling over his estate in a Mt Panorama-size battle of the wills. A "big picture" man, Brock liked to take care of the fun things in his life, like motor racing and sponsorship deals. The paperwork he left to others, hoping they would take care of the detail - or that it would take care of itself.

Bev Brock, who Brock always referred to as his wife, although the couple never married, said Brock had a cavalier attitude towards anything legal and financial.

"He expressed the view that as he would not be around after he died, he had nothing to worry about," she told the Victorian Supreme Court. When he died in September 2006 in a crash at a road rally outside Perth, others were left to sort things out.

Those problems became public in March 2005, when Brock walked out on Bev and the family's idyllic farm, to be with his lover Bamford. Bamford left her husband of 35 years, plumber Ron McCurdy, and their two children to swap her suburban life for one of glamour with her best friend's husband - Peter Brock. The farm had been in the Brock family since 1866. Peter and Bev bought it in the early 1980s. With a bargain starting price of \$2.5 million, the farm sold as part of the divorce settlement. But Brock's death left the family in financial limbo when the proceeds were frozen.

When he walked out of Kiah Kerrabee, Brock took memorabilia worth about \$300,000, including trophies. He also took the second of three wills at the centre of an expensive court battle. Only one was signed and witnessed and there is the rub.

Recently, Justice Elizabeth Hollingworth ruled the 2003 will was valid and his estate should be split between his children, with Bamford receiving nothing. Bev Brock revealed yesterday that the family had tried but failed to negotiate a settlement with Bamford.

Lawyers could be the real winners, with current fees estimated to be over \$250,000 and with Bamford announcing she planned to lodge a claim on the estate. Even Justice Hollingworth warned: "How much (the children) get at the end of the day depends on other outcomes and other proceedings."

This legal fight, like Bathurst, appears to be an endurance event. We would encourage all clients to consider a review of their wills. Current research indicates approximately 25% of the adult population have a workable enforceable will.