# Castan Centre News

## World Renowned Philosopher Inspires Castan Centre Audience

As inspiring as Castan Centre lectures usually are, it is not often that our speakers present solutions to the world's problems that might actually be supported by many of its governments. But so it was on a cold April night in Melbourne.

Professor Thomas Pogge, who came to prominence through his writing on



*Professor Pogge during his lecture*

ethics and political philosophy, has in recent years focussed heavily on world poverty and human rights. This passion has led the Professor of Philosophy and International Affairs at Yale University to ask how we can stop the deaths of some 50,000 human beings, mostly children, which are caused every day by avoidable poverty-related diseases. One of the important factors in these deaths is the lack of affordable drugs, or of any suitable drugs at all.

Although drugs are often too expensive for the poor to afford, according to Professor Pogge, an equally great problem is that suitable drugs often do not exist. This is in large part because drug companies can make more money by developing a new hair loss or acne drug for sale to people in rich nations than by developing a drug to cure malaria. Although the Malaria drug may save millions of lives, it won't make the company

much money because most malaria sufferers can't afford to pay for it.

So Professor Pogge has focussed on finding a solution that provides incentives for drug companies to invest money in under-funded areas. His solution? Rich nations, perhaps under the aegis of the UN or the World Trade Organisation, will bankroll a fund which pays drug companies not on the basis of the number of courses sold but on the basis of the health impact that a drug has, for example, the more the death rate from malaria falls, the more the manufacturer of the malaria drug makes. So is it likely to become reality? He is not there yet, but with the backing of his organisation, Incentives for Global Health, and the absence of hostile opposition from pharmaceutical companies, he is well on the way.

*A full report on Professor Pogge's lecture will appear in the next edition.*

## Castan Centre, OUP Setting Up Huge Human Rights Database

The Castan Centre has been commissioned by the Oxford University Press to create a ground-breaking online database of individual complaints heard by United Nations treaty bodies, which will be part of a larger OUP database to be launched in July. There are currently four human rights treaty bodies with the jurisdiction to hear complaints from individuals who claim that their human rights have been violated by their government. Each body has jurisdiction over one UN human rights treaty, the main one being the Human Rights Committee, which oversees the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
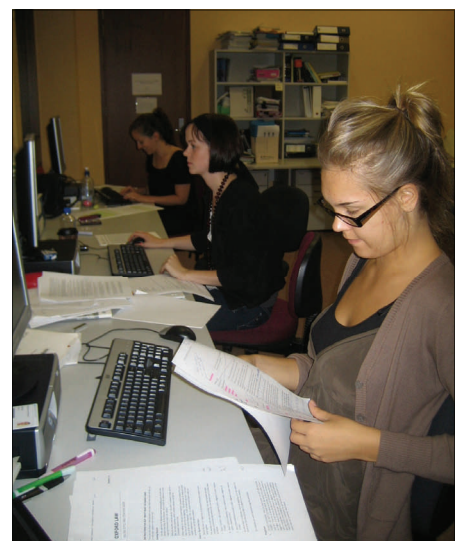
The database will compile summaries of the more than 1700 cases decided by these committees.

This project is being undertaken by Castan Centre staff and predominantly by our remarkable In-House Interns

under the supervision of Castan Centre Director, Professor Sarah Joseph. As In-House Intern Jenna Donsky stated, "at the Castan Centre I have been fortunate to participate in this project. Each case exposed me to different legal systems, the processes of the United Nations treaty bodies and a never ending array of issues relating to human rights. Working on this project also made me greatly aware of the importance of complaint mechanisms in establishing precedent regarding the interpretation and application of international human rights law and the significance of such international scrutiny in ensuring transparency and accountability regarding violations of human rights by countries."

This project is an immense undertaking for the Castan Centre and will be an important human rights resource for the future.

Information about in-house internships can be found at www.law.monash.edu.au/castancentre/internships/in-house-internship.html



*Interns Philippa Ross, Fiona Ransom and Stephanie Cheligoy work on OUP cases*