

### World expert on people with disabilities to speak



Tina Minkowitz, a psychiatric survivor and leading expert on the rights of people with disabilities, will present a public lecture on 3 June at the Monash University Law Chambers.

Ms Minkowitz, a human rights lawyer, and co-chair of the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry, played a key role in the drafting of the UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) which entered into force in May 2008. Her lecture will discuss the CRPD and its potential to be “A New International Order for the Human Rights of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry”. The CRPD is the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st century.

Ms Minkowitz’ interest in the area of disability rights arose after her own experience in a psychiatric institution in 1977. She recently told ABC Radio:

“I was taken against my will to a psychiatric institution. I was kept against my will for about six weeks, forced to

take drugs, and I had never had anything like that happen to me before. I had never experienced any real violence, I had never experienced anything where I was put into a situation where I had absolutely no power. And the forced drugging in particular, it was an experience that made me feel like I was out of my mind.”

Ms Minkowitz is the author of “The UN Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities and the Right to be Free from Nonconsensual Psychiatric Interventions”, and has argued that forced psychiatric treatment amounts to torture. Ms Minkowitz will speak about the implications of the CRPD for users and survivors of psychiatry.

**Ms Minkowitz is visiting Australia courtesy of the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) for their inaugural national conference in Melbourne on May 28-29 that will focus on the implementation of the CRPD in Australia** (see [www.afdo.org.au](http://www.afdo.org.au) for details).

### Castan Centre adds three new associates

The Castan Centre is delighted to announce the appointment of Monash Law Faculty academics Dr Heli Askola, Dr Gideon Boas and Dr Stephen Gray as new Associates.

Dr Askola received her undergraduate law degree in her native Finland and her PhD in Italy before working as a lecturer in law at Cardiff Law School in the UK. She arrived at Monash in 2008 and researches and teaches mainly in the areas of criminal law, EU law, migration law, international human rights and feminist legal theory.

Dr Boas commenced at Monash in July

2007 after returning from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, based in The Hague, where he was Senior Legal Officer. His PhD thesis focused on the Milosevic case, on which he worked while at the tribunal. Dr Boas’ primary academic interests are international criminal law, international humanitarian law, public international law and complex litigation. In addition to his role at Monash, Dr Boas is currently working as part of the defence team for the Radovan Karadzic trial in The Hague.

Dr Gray was employed for 14 years at Charles Darwin University before arriving at Monash in 2008. His major interests are criminal law and Indigenous legal issues, including particularly the “Stolen Wages” issue, on which he is currently writing a book. Dr Gray, a Monash alumnus, has also written a novel, *The Artist is a Thief*, which was set in an Indigenous community in the Northern Territory.

**An interview with Dr Gray can be found on page 17 of this newsletter.**

### Research project on human rights for those deprived of liberty gets underway

A research team, including Dr Bronwyn Naylor, Professor Arie Freiberg, and Castan Centre Deputy Director Dr Julie Debeljak, has begun to examine the implementation of human rights in “closed environments”, that is places where people are deprived of their liberty by lawful means such as judicial or administrative orders. Prisons, immigration detention centres and some psychiatric and disability settings are examples of such environments.

The project aims to assess the readiness of closed environments to incorporate and

apply human rights obligations into their daily operations, and to develop practical strategies to facilitate compliance with human rights obligations. The project will also evaluate the likely impact of proposed and existing human rights legislation in Australia on the functioning of closed environments.

The research team has brought together Ombudsman Victoria, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, the Office of Police Integrity, Office of the Public Advocate, The Office

of the Inspector of Custodial Services (WA) and the Commonwealth Ombudsman as partners on this project. The project is funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant, and the six organisations have made significant contributions to the development and oversight of the project, ensuring that the results have maximum practical impact on policy and practice developments in the field.

**For further information, contact Dr Bronwyn Naylor** ([bronwyn.naylor@law.monash.edu.au](mailto:bronwyn.naylor@law.monash.edu.au))