

# Annual conference to explore a challenging year in human rights

Internet freedom, human rights in China, discrimination by religious bodies and same-sex marriage are just some of the areas that will be explored during *Human Rights 2010*, the Castan Centre's annual conference. The conference, to be held on 16 July 2010 at the State Library of Victoria, is sure to provide an engaging dialogue on human rights, while ruffling many feathers along the way.

Dr Helen Szoke, Commissioner of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and Phil Lynch, Director of the Human Rights Law Resource Centre will launch the day by discussing religious groups and the discrimination exception under the Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act*, and charters of rights respectively. Both topics have received extensive media attention and public interest over the past year and will continue to be hot topics into the future.

The second session will focus on minority group rights with Megan Davis, Director of the Indigenous Law Centre UNSW, discussing Indigenous rights in the aftermath of the National Human Rights Consultation. Many Indigenous leaders were disappointed with the amount of time the Consultation Committee spent on Indigenous issues. Dr Adiva Sifris of

Monash University Law School will explore the simmering issue of same-sex marriage in this session, and Peter van Onselen, Associate Professor at Edith Cowan University and Contributing Editor at *The Australian*, will address the highly topical refugee policy of the Rudd government. The domestic focus of this session will highlight where we are currently failing in our human rights obligations.

John Garnaut, current China correspondent for Fairfax, will kick off the afternoon session with an in depth account of the current human rights situation in China and ask whether change is possible. Iarla Flynn, Head of Public Policy and Government Affairs at Google Australia will then look at internet freedom, in light of recent developments both here and overseas.

The day will close with Professor Ron McCallum AO, Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, exploring the recently created Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and Dr Jane McAdam, Director of International Law Programs, Gilbert & Tobin Centre of Public Law, addressing the recent climate change negotiations and their potential effect on human rights.



Dr Helen Szoke, Professor Ron McCallum AO, Mr Iarla Flynn, Dr Adiva Sifris

**For more information on the conference, visit the conference website:**

[www.law.monash.edu.au/castancentre/events/2010/conference-2010.html](http://www.law.monash.edu.au/castancentre/events/2010/conference-2010.html)

## Centre Directors release three new books

Castan Centre directors have recently released three new books.

Centre Director Professor Sarah Joseph and Deputy Director Dr Adam McBeth have edited the *Research Handbook on International Human Rights Law*. It compiles the work of 25 leading human rights scholars from around the world on a wide range of topics. To produce a handbook on such a broad topic is, in the editors' own words, "a daunting task" and the book necessarily ranges through a number of overlapping themes. From refugee, development and international criminal law, through international and regional human rights bodies, to specific issues such as terrorism and human rights education, the book provides something for almost every academic or researcher in human rights.

The editors said in their preface that the chapters "are designed to be both accessible to the novice human rights scholar and yet of great interest to the seasoned human rights researcher". As

Castan Centre Patron, the Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG has said, "this book furthers the enterprise [of the advance of global human rights] with a collection of cutting edge chapters on the legal issues of the second half of the 20th century."

The second recently released book, co-edited by Professors Sarah Joseph, David Kinley (former Castan Centre Director), and Jeff Waincymer, is *The World Trade Organization and Human Rights: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. The book brings together the work of trade and human rights scholars in a critical analysis of the connection between human rights issues and the World Trade Organization. This hotly debated area of law is critically examined by experts on law, economics, philosophy and political science. Gabrielle Marceau of the World Trade Organization states that "the authors of this unique publication should be commended for providing a comprehensive interdisciplinary analysis of the new trade and human rights debate. Their most notable achievement

is their capacity to clearly demarcate the main parameters of all the legal, social, human and economic dimensions of the interaction between trade liberalisation and the protection of human rights." Castan Centre Associate, Dr Patrick Emerton has also contributed a chapter to this book.

Finally, Professor Joseph and Deputy Director Melissa Castan have released the third edition of their much acclaimed *Federal Constitutional Law: A Contemporary View*. This comprehensive text on constitutional law has been updated with recent High Court cases and provides additional commentary on the latest developments and future directions of constitutional law. This engaging text explains High Court jurisprudence and constitutional law principles in a clear and accessible manner to readers. This update has been greatly anticipated by lecturers and students alike.