

Monash Law Alumni Take Human Rights from Field to Journal

In 2011, the Castan Centre awarded two \$4000 bursaries to two Monash Law alumni working in the field of human rights to publish an academic paper of between 6000 and 8000 words on a topic related to their work. The successful candidates were Rachel Ball and Sophia Kagan, who were also both awarded the title of Castan Centre Honorary Associate.

In the course of its work, the Castan Centre liaises with many outstanding, committed people working in the broad field of human rights. Often these people have implemented human rights law and theory in their work and have the knowledge to evaluate the application of human rights in practical situations. The *Field to Journal* project aims to give field workers with the best ideas and analyses of current human rights issues the assistance needed to engage with the human rights community by publishing in academic journals.

Field to Journal complements the Castan Centre's public engagement: while our policy and public education programs endeavour to make academic work accessible to the general public, *Field to Journal* seeks to make the ideas of field workers more accessible to academics and others working in the human rights field. In short, this program helps to fulfil the Castan Centre's aim of breaking down barriers between different groups of people who work in human rights, or have a strong interest in the area.

Rachel Ball is Director of Advocacy and Campaigns at the Human Rights Law Centre. The HRLC seeks to advance human rights through a combination of advocacy, strategic litigation, research and education. Rachel has led much of the Centre's work in the areas of refugee and asylum seeker rights, anti-discrimination law reform, women's rights and international development.

Rachel is a Vice President of Liberty Victoria and a member of the steering committee of the Equality Rights Alliance, Australia's largest network advocating for women's equality. Rachel also sits on the board of Alola Australia, an organisation that supports work on women's advocacy, economic development, education and maternal health in Timor-Leste.

Rachel chose to write on religious opposition to human rights laws because "adequately addressing the concerns of religious groups is an essential step towards a more productive and evidence-based

debate about the protection and promotion of human rights in Australia". She said that her article "aims to fill gaps in the dialogue between religious organisations and human rights groups and to break down the perceived conflict between religion and human rights."

Sophia Kagan completed her law studies at Monash University (2001-2007), where she was awarded the Supreme Court Prize for her thesis on the legality of amnesties for mass atrocities under international law. She spent two and a half years working as a commercial lawyer with the firm Minter Ellison before moving to Beijing, China, where she was an AusAID volunteer, working with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in managing a complex capacity building project to improve the rights of young rural-urban Chinese migrants. Following the completion of this project, Sophia went on to undertake consultancies with the ILO and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization on different thematic areas including migration, environment and food safety. She has just commence a Masters of International Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

In choosing to write about victims trafficked into non-sexual labour, Sophia says that while "the sexual exploitation of vulnerable trafficked women captures the hearts and attention of legislators, journalists and the public...it is eclipsed in number by the victims trafficked into non-sexual labour, hidden away to toil on farms, in factories, mines and private homes".

Sophia focused on China where "for political and economic reasons", more attention is given to "trafficking for sexual exploitation than trafficking for labour exploitation". Sophia chose to write about the issue "after working with the ILO on a project regarding the rights of vulnerable young migrants", where she "began to see the limitations of the Chinese response to trafficking and forced labour". In the article, Sophia tries "to piece together the available information on trafficking for labour exploitation, showing the gaps but also trying to address the questions with what research and information already exists – namely, how big is the problem, what are the barriers to effective action, and what can be done in future by the Chinese government".

The *Field to Journal* bursaries are supported by a three year grant from the **Alan and Elizabeth Finkel Foundation**.