

Castan Centre 2015 Human Rights Conference... We've got a lot to talk about



Sarah Joseph, Gillan C York and Elaine Pearson during a Q&A session at our 2014 conference

As the human rights landscape becomes ever more challenging, Australia's only annual human rights conference grows ever more relevant. Join over 300 supporters of human rights at Deakin Edge, Federation Square to hear from speakers covering topics of both international and domestic significance.

Adela Navarro Bello, General Director of Zeta Magazine, Mexico

Mexico is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. Since 1992, 32 journalists have been killed in Mexico and most of those crimes remain unsolved. Zeta Magazine, based in Tijuana, is one of only a few publications who investigate organised crime, trafficking and corruption in Mexico. Over the last 25 years they have paid a high cost with two staff killed and assassination attempts made on others. Adela will speak on journalism and corruption in Mexico's drug war.

Fiona McCormack, CEO, Domestic Violence Victoria

The appointments of Rosie Batty and Ken Lay to a panel to advise COAG, the Victorian Government's Royal Commission into Family Violence, a "Q and A" program dedicated to family violence, and talks of national Domestic Violence Order scheme have come at a time when the most likely cause of death or injury in Australia for women under 45 is family violence, and roughly one woman a week is killed by her former or current partner. These statistics represent just part of the family violence plague to be discussed by Fiona.

Brett Walker SC, former Independent National Security Legislation Monitor

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has previously said the balance between freedom and security may have to shift in light of increased threats from terrorism. Part of this shift is new laws on freedom fighters, metadata, surveillance, journalists and whistle-blowers who disclose classified information, as well as increased powers for ASIO. Are these necessary? Are counterterrorism laws and human rights protections fundamentally incompatible, or is it a false conflict? Brett's former role as Independent National Security Legislation Monitor has placed him in a unique

position to comment on these issues.

Helen Szoke, Chief Executive of Oxfam Australia

In 2016 the richest 1% of people in the world will have more wealth than the other 99% of people. In Australia the wealthiest 1% has more than the least wealthy 60%. Extreme inequality can have long term global economic implications and can be entrenched across generations through lack of access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities and political power. Oxfam Australia CEO Helen will consider how we can reduce inequality as well as the human implications of growing domestic and global inequality.

Martin Hodgson, Senior Advocate, Foreign Prisoner Support Service

Each year around 1,000 Australians are arrested overseas and more than 250 are in prisons overseas at any one time. High profile recent cases have included Journalist Peter Grete, who spent more than a year in an Egyptian prison, as well as Myuran Sukumaran and Andrew Chan, who were recently executed for drug convictions in Indonesia. Martin Hodgson will discuss the plight of Australians arrested and imprisoned abroad, including those on death row, and how governments, media and human rights organisations should respond, and what they have done wrong in the past.

Dennis Eggington, CEO, Aboriginal Legal Service WA

A long-standing legacy of dispossession is evidenced today by the over-representation of indigenous people in Australian court and prison systems. The enforced fracturing of our families and removal from Country has had a major and devastating effect on Indigenous people. Dennis will discuss the proposal to close remote communities in WA and the impact that future evictions from Country will have on Community members.

Tim Wilson, Australian Human Rights Commissioner

Businesses are not human beings, so they do not have human rights. But individuals own

businesses and often exercise their human rights through businesses. Business is the exercise of human rights, including people's right to physical and intellectual property, and the freedom to trade it. Businesses can also be a force for good in advancing and respecting human rights. But they can also harm and hinder them. Drawing on recent examples, Australian Human Rights Commissioner, Tim Wilson, will explore the relationship between human rights and business, and whether business rights trump human rights or if they are the same thing.

Sarah Joseph, Director, Castan Centre for Human Rights Law

Australia has received much criticism from international and local human rights community over its harsh policies towards asylum-seekers seeking to come to Australia by boat. The most common defence of these policies, from both the government and those parts of the press which favour strong "border protection", is that these policies save lives, by deterring deadly boat journeys. After all, available figures indicate that about 1200 people tragically drowned in failed boat journeys between 2009 and 2013. The dangers of such boat journeys have also been manifested, horribly, in crossings from Libya to Europe in the Mediterranean Sea.

How sound is this argument? Does it justify the policies adopted by the Australian government, which do seem to have slowed if not stopped the boats? Centre Director Sarah Joseph will critique the "drownings argument", and associated human rights issues.

Paula Gerber, Deputy Director, Castan Centre for Human Rights Law

Surrogacy, and in particular commercial/compensated surrogacy, is a highly emotive issue. People tend to polarise into two extreme camps; either seeing it as exploitative of women, or as a blessing for childless couples who want to begin a family. Discussions of regulation tend to focus on whether surrogacy should be banned, left to market forces or regulated by governments. Paula asks how can we instead use the Convention on the Rights of the Child to inform the regulation of surrogacy.

Thank you to our conference platinum sponsors Corrs Chambers Westgarth, Maurice Blackburn and The Saturday Paper.

The 2015 Castan Centre human rights conference will be held on Friday 24 July at Fed Square in Melbourne. Tickets are now available via our [website](#).