

Editorial

This issue has been a long time in the making. The core of the papers were delivered in the law panel at the interdisciplinary symposium “Moral Panics, the Media and the Law”, which was held at the University of Newcastle on 28 and 29 September 2005. The symposium was jointly organised by Professor David Lemmings from the discipline of History, Dr Nancy E. Wright from the discipline of English and Katherine Lindsay from the Law School. Both David and Nancy have since moved to academic positions at other Australian institutions. It is a pleasure to acknowledge here their seminal role in organising the theme of the symposium and the panels which focussed on moral panics in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The papers presented at the Symposium touched upon a rich variety of issues, including, witch hunts in England, Catholics and Moral Panics in the 17th century, forgery, transvestism in early Stuart London, London Crime and the Press, “squatter settlements” in Papua New Guinea, the South Sea Bubble, DH Lawrence, “mods and rockers”, contemporary Tort Law Reform and the Family Law Act of 1975. The Symposium drew on the research of over a dozen local and international scholars in exploring the relationship between legal regulation and the social context in which it was promulgated. Historians, scholars of literature, sociology and the law stimulated debate and lively conversation about how to identify a “moral panic” and the “deviance” giving rise to it, the role of the media in enflaming or diffusing a state of panic, and law’s relationship with the two. These ideas have a particular contemporary resonance which has not dimmed since the Symposium in 2005. The “war on terror” has given new life to “moral panics, media and the law” for our own time.

In keeping with the tradition of this review, the volume also contains the text of the fourteenth Sir Ninian Stephen lecture which was delivered by Fr Frank Brennan SJ AO in 2006. It is a broad ranging and personal reflection by Professor Brennan on his role as “land rights advocate”. The lecture had a powerful impact on many of the law students and staff who listened to it being delivered in Newcastle. It is a privilege to be able to bring it to a wider audience. This paper is complemented by a critique of Michael Connor’s recent book, *The Invention of Terra Nullius*, by Kevin Williams. It is a pleasure to include the case note on *Markarian v The Queen*, which represents work commenced by our graduate Ross Abbs as an honours dissertation during his final semester as an undergraduate in the School.

Katherine Lindsay
Editor