

Castan Centre Launch

The Faculty of Law's new Castan Centre for Human Rights Law will reach out to the world, according to High Court **Justice Michael Kirby**. Speaking at the Centre's launch on 31 October 2000, Justice Kirby said it was wonderful to celebrate the establishment of a Centre which will continue exploring the ideals of its namesake, Mr Ron Castan QC (see obituaries page 12).

Justice Kirby said the death of the distinguished barrister in 1999 had meant losing a champion of Aboriginal and human rights issues. 'It was his kind that executed the tectonic shift in Commonwealth law in Australia that is now known by everyone as *Mabo* and was one of the moving forces that led to the decision in the High Court on the *Wik* case', Justice Kirby said.

The Castan Centre, committed to the protection and promotion of human rights through research and education, should continue adding a 'real cutting edge' to human rights issues across the world, he said. 'It will be vital – if the Centre is to be true to Ron Castan's name – that it dedicate a great part of its work to the human rights of the indigenous people of Australia'.

Justice Kirby also said that the Centre should look at incorporating international human rights law into Australian law and contributing to the debate about introducing a Bill of Rights in Australia.

Other areas of interest mentioned by Justice Kirby were human rights issues around Asia and the Pacific in countries such as China and Cambodia and future questions relating to drug-addicted people, infringements in cyberspace, and the human genome.



Monash Dean of Law **Professor Stephen Parker** (above) said the Castan Centre would be a 'flagship activity' for the school. 'We describe ourselves as a law school for a changing world. The Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, introduced to address human rights issues in a changing world, typifies how we see ourselves and our defining themes', he said. 'We see ethics and human rights as based in autonomy and respect for the individual'.

Castan Centre director **Professor David Kinley** (at left with Justice Kirby) said the centre is pursuing 'what we believe to be a cardinal lesson of pioneers such as Ron Castan – that in the interaction between the global and the local lies the key to our better understanding of, and respect for, each other'.

About 150 people attended the launch at law firm **Phillips Fox**, including members of the Castan family (pictured below with Justice Kirby).

