

# Castan Centre Directors and Members in 2005

## Centre Directors

**Professor Sarah Joseph (Director):** Sarah will be Visiting Fellow at the Lauterpacht Centre for International Law at Cambridge University from February to June 2006. While there, she will work on an ARC grant on the WTO and human rights.

**Dr Julie Debeljak (Associate Director):** Julie is on maternity leave. She recently took part in an Academic Roundtable with the Victorian Human Rights Consultative Committee relating to the protection of human rights in Victoria.

**Melissa Castan (Associate Director):** Melissa is currently overseeing a Native Title project in conjunction with UNSW.

**Paula Gerber (Associate Director):** Paula is completing her PhD. See our interview opposite.

## Law Faculty Centre Members

Dr Yet Bryant  
Jonathan Clough  
Patrick Emerton  
Associate Prof Susan Kneebone  
David Lindsay  
Oyiela Litaba  
Prof Bernadette McSherry  
Kwame Mfodwo  
Dr Bronwyn Naylor  
Dr Pam O'Connor  
Maria O'Sullivan  
Tania Penovic  
Jenny Schultz  
Adiva Sifris  
Dr Eric Wilson  
David Yarrow

## Faculty Graduate Members

Nicole Bieske  
Susannah Jacobson  
Joanna Kyriakakis  
Adam McBeth  
Helen Potts  
Natalie Bugalski  
Augusto Zimmerman

## Six Questions for Paula Gerber, new Associate Director of the Castan Centre

### Where were you working prior to coming to the Castan Centre?

I was a partner in a large Melbourne law firm until 2000 when I left full-time private practice in favour of a portfolio career consisting of: Senior Fellow in the Faculty of Architecture, Building & Planning at the University of Melbourne and Director of Construction Law Studies at the Law School there; consultant with Lander & Rogers, Lawyers; and Sessional Member at VCAT.

### Tell us about your time as a construction lawyer.

I was in private practice for 20 years before making the move into academia. Most of the time I enjoyed it because it allowed me to work in some great places – I spent five years in London and five years in Los Angeles.

### What inspired the switch to human rights law?

Basically I became jaded with construction law; every dispute looked the same and there was nothing new or exciting about it. So, in my search for other areas of law that might be more meaningful and interesting, I decided to do a masters in law at Monash and one of the first subjects I did was International Human Rights Law with Sarah Joseph. I was hooked and knew that I had found my niche. So I finished my masters doing as many human rights subjects as I could and then enrolled in a PhD at the University of Melbourne.

### Which area of human rights law are you most passionate about?

My PhD looks at the international law obligation to educate children about human rights. A few years ago, I taught a Human Rights course at the University of Prishtina in Kosovo and was surprised by my students' lack of knowledge about human rights. Then I realised that Australian students are no different because they don't learn about human rights at school.

So my passions are human rights education and children's rights. I believe that one of the best ways to improve

respect for human rights is to educate the young about their rights. One of my favourite expressions is:

*If you are thinking a year ahead - plant seeds; if you are thinking 10 years ahead - plant a tree; if you are thinking 100 years ahead - educate the people* (Kuan Tzu).

### What do you see as the biggest human rights issues in Australia?

Human rights has become a dirty phrase. It has been labeled as something that only the "chattering class" is interested in. As a result human rights here are regressing. This can be seen in David Hicks' detention at Guantanamo Bay and our government's silence in the face of his pending 'trial' which violates all standards of fairness and natural justice; the demonising of asylum seekers and their indefinite imprisonment; and the treatment of indigenous Australians, in particular the lack of reconciliation. One way that we can address these issues is through formal and informal education.

### Where do you see the Castan Centre going in the future?

The centre has a reputation as one of the preeminent human rights law centres in Australia. I see this continuing, particularly in the field of human rights education. We have conducted human rights training for delegations from Iraq and Indonesia as well as for our own Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I see these courses as a vital part of the centre's work and envisage them increasing in the future.

In 2006, the Monash Law School will launch the first Masters in Human Rights Law in Australia. This is in line with our mission to protect and promote human rights through the provision of education. I would like to see the centre at the forefront of human rights education, not just for lawyers and law students but for the community generally. We have a key role to play in promoting human rights through inter-disciplinary education of people from all sectors of society.