

Bringing Dark Acts Into The Light

The Castan Centre has recently completed a handbook for the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) which will help to further the fight to eradicate torture around the world. The handbook is part of a four-volume series being published by OMCT to assist individuals and non government organisations with the process of bringing acts of torture into the light.

Seeking Remedies for Torture Victims: A Handbook on the Individual Complaints Procedures of the UN Treaty Bodies (Volume 4) has been co-authored by the Director of the Castan Centre, Professor Sarah Joseph,

Carin Benninger-Budel and Castan Centre research assistants Katie Mitchell and Linda Gyorki. The book includes a foreword by Manfred Nowak, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, and has been translated into French, Spanish, Arabic & Russian. It will be launched in Geneva in November 2006.

The handbook seeks to empower individuals to seek justice from the Human Rights Committee, the Committee Against Torture and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women by de-mystifying their processes and procedures. It includes

a step by step guide on how to submit a complaint as well as a detailed analysis of the jurisprudence of both Committees.

The current political climate has led some individuals to suggest that the practice of torture may be justified in certain circumstances. In such a climate, it is essential that the absolute prohibition on torture is enforced and the abhorrent nature of such acts is recalled. It is hoped that the handbook will assist those who fight to uphold this principle.

2006 Human Rights Essay Competition Highlights Voices of the Future

Monash University Law School, in conjunction with The Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, would like to congratulate Tom Ballard, winner of its 2006 Human Writes Essay Competition. Tom's school, Brauer College, in Warrnambool, was also named the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law School of Excellence for its outstanding effort across the board.

The competition was open to all Victorian Year 11 and 12 students, who were asked to write on the topic "we have more to fear from the State than from terrorists." Students were allowed to argue either for or against the statement. The response to the competition was tremendous highlighting the interest young people have with this current and extremely controversial topic.

Tom's thought-provoking essay contended that terrorism was not a new phenomenon, and rather what is unique to terrorism in today's age is not its frequency but the heightened sense of fear that surrounds it. He was presented with his \$1500 prize by Castan Centre Associate Director, Paula Gerber, during the Monash Law School's annual law week debate. His essay was also published in *The Age* newspaper's education supplement.

Place-getters and recipients of special commendation awards were also presented with their prizes. Second prize and \$1000 went to James Gullaci from Carey Baptist Grammar School. James persuasively argued that legislation aimed at preventing terrorist activities was disproportionately draconian and was a far greater threat to contemporary society and collective human rights than the actions of terrorists.



Paula Gerber, Deputy Director of the Castan Centre, presents the award to Tom Ballard.

Third prize and \$500 went to Alicia Cheah from Genezzano College. Alicia explored the operations of Singapore's Internal Security Department and concluded that such organisations could be more effective in oppressing civilians than dealing with terrorist threats. Certificates of commendation for their outstanding submissions were

awarded to Jade Cleggett of Eumemmerring College, Isabelle Lane of Loreto Mandeville Hall and Nghi Kiem of Lowther Hall.

The judging panel was greatly impressed overall with entrants' ability to explore both the specifics and generalities of the topic and the manner in which they contrasted the effects of State and terrorist actions on civil liberties. They were especially buoyed by the great response of students from Mazenod College, Eumemmerring Secondary College, Carey Baptist Grammar School and, of course, Brauer College.

The Castan Centre, in conjunction with the Monash University Law School, would like to thank all of those students and schools who contributed to the great success of this year's Human Writes Essay Competition. We hope that both students and schools will continue their strong commitment to issues of such great social importance.

Tom's essay is printed on page 10.