

Castan Centre Awarded Native Title Project

The Castan Centre is thrilled to announce its participation in an exciting new program aimed at assisting Indigenous communities dealing with native title issues. Melissa Castan, Deputy Director of the Castan Centre, David Yarrow, lecturer in the Monash law faculty and Richard Potok, honorary research fellow, have successfully tendered to conduct a capacity building professional development program for the staff of Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRBs).

NTRBs perform the crucial task of assisting native title claimants and holders to navigate the legal processes and procedures involved with making applications under the Native Title Act, as well as assisting with negotiations related to Indigenous Land Use Agreements.

The new project is being commissioned by the Commonwealth Government, and is supported by the University of NSW, as well as the law faculty at Monash University. The Commonwealth is following up on a report issued by a parliamentary

committee on Native Title, which referred to the Castan Centre Report completed in April 2005.

The Committee's report stated that there was a need to "increase the stock of knowledge" of NTRBs, and especially for the professional staff working at the representative bodies. The Parliamentary report also generated significant public discussion and attracted widespread interest amongst many different groups including the media, politicians, academics, bureaucratic/departmental personnel, the judiciary, commercial law firms and naturally the NTRBs themselves.

One of the initiatives to be put in place by the project is a student placement program for NTRBs, which gives students the opportunity to gain valuable first hand experience of the field, while also assisting the NTRBs in their daily operation. The program will oversee the creation of an induction manual to provide new staff with an understanding of both the context in which they are working and the key legal and native title concepts, issues and proc-

esses. Training, development and support needs of current NTRB staff will also be addressed.

In a wider context, the importance of familiarising the legal community with the work and career opportunities within the NTRBs is also recognised and the program aims to foster the creation of a network of people working within and connected to the work of the NTRBs to provide support, and training.

Ms Castan said "this is a great opportunity for the Commonwealth, the NTRBs and academic specialists to work together on improving professional development in this field".

Information on the student internship program is available at www.auroraprojects.com.au

In other training news the Castan Centre has won a tender to provide human rights training to, and to create human rights training materials for the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria. The training will relate to the recent adoption in Victoria of a Charter of Rights and Responsibilities.

Jeffrey Sachs Heads Impressive Speaker Line Up for 2007

The coming year is already shaping up to be very exciting for the Castan Centre. The focus on public education continues as the centre hosts a variety of international speakers to discuss aspects of their work and human rights issues particular to their field. Already on the guest list is Jeffrey Sachs the Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, deemed by the New York Times Magazine to

be "the most important economist in the world". Bono describes Sachs as the "economist who can bring to life statistics that were, after all, lives in the first place. He can look up from the numbers and see faces through the spreadsheets." Professor Sachs will appear via video link at a breakfast seminar in February. Other guests include Jonathan Liberman, a lawyer who specialises in legal and policy is-

ssues relating to tobacco and Sir Nigel Rodley. Sir Nigel was the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture from 1993 to 2001 and is a current member of the UN Human Rights Committee and a Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists. He has worked at UN Headquarters in New York and was founding head of the legal office at the International Secretariat of Amnesty International.

New Human Rights Activist Joins the Castan Team

Alex Lucinda Gerber, daughter of Paula Gerber (Deputy Director of the Castan Centre) and partner Lauren Costello was born on the 26th of July, weighing 3.4 kg and measuring 49cm.

Although the smallest and youngest member of the Castan Centre, Paula assures us that Alex, whose name means 'protector of mankind', is al-



ready "actively asserting her children's rights, while I am considering changing my specialty to parent's rights!"

The Centre is thrilled to welcome Alex into the world and extends its warmest congratulations to Paula and Lauren.