

2007 Conference Focuses on the Environment

While the movie 'An inconvenient truth' shot the issue of climate change into the public limelight in 2006, the legal industry has been grappling with the complex and controversial impact that climate change will have on the law for a number of years.

The Castan Centre's annual Human Rights: the Year in Review conference - *Human Rights and the Environment* - aims to explore the pressing implications of the intermingling of human rights and the environment and the impacts each has on the other.

Headlining this year's conference, which will be held on 30 November at the Malthouse, is Martin Wagner, a Holding Redlich Distinguished Visiting Fellow, and managing attorney for Earthjustice's international program, which is dedicated to finding international solutions to the impact of climate change. At EarthJustice, Martin works with international institutions to defend the environment from damage coming from unregulated international trade as well as to promote and protect the human right to a healthy environment. To that end, he recently filed a petition with the Inter-American Court of Justice on behalf of the Inuit people. The petition seeks to identify Global Warming as a human rights issue and was prepared with Sheila Watt-Cloutier, an Inuit woman who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore (this year's winner). In his

paper, Martin will discuss the effect of global warming on different cultural and national groups. Adding to the topic, Ms Rowena Cantley-Smith, from the Monash law faculty, will discuss the intersection of international environmental law, human rights and their transcendence into the broader energy market.

The crisis in Darfur has also gained international attention on account of the vast human rights violations there. While many lives have been lost to armed conflict, Professor John Langmore of the Political Science Department at the University of Melbourne, will discuss how the government-supported fighting is exacerbating the competition for scarce environmental resources in Darfur.

As the world's largest per capita greenhouse gas emitter, Australia's obligation to assisting in environmental policy reform is pressing. Cam Walker, Campaigns Co-ordinator for Friends of the Earth, will discuss Australia's responsibility as a wealthy country and greenhouse gas emitter, to the global poor and set out actions it should undertake in this area. This responsibility will increase as Australia continues to play a key role in the emerging nuclear energy sector as one of the world's main suppliers and a potential user. Ron Levy, of the Northern Land Council, will discuss

the need for Australia to address the issues of nuclear waste and its effect on the environment before it can move forward in utilizing nuclear power as an energy source.

In a slight shift away from the conference focus, human rights and the environment, Mr Philip Lynch, Director, Human Rights Law Resource Centre, will discuss the September 2007 High Court decision *Vickie Roach v The Commonwealth*, in which the Court found a constitutionally entrenched right to vote in the Australian Constitution. This decision returned the right to vote to over 8,000 Australian prisoners, of whom a quarter are Indigenous.

This year's annual conference offers a unique blending of human rights and environmental law along with an update of some other current pressing human rights developments. As two of the world's pressing issues, the influence they have on one another impacts on a wide variety of people and issues. The conference will explore this impact and we invite you to be a part of the discussion it is assured to raise.

Christie Weeramantry, former Vice President of the International Court of Justice, and Emeritus Professor at Monash University, will be the conference rapporteur.

Keep Informed on the Castan Centre Website

The Castan Centre constantly keeps its website updated, giving members and interested passers-by the chance to keep up-to-date with what's happening at the Castan Centre and around the world.

All Castan Centre events are advertised on the website and the centre's "bulletin board" provides information on other human rights-related events happening in Australia and elsewhere.

Organisations wishing to have their events advertised on the bulletin board can email a brief summary to castan.centre@law.monash.edu.au. And, if appropriate, we will add the event to the board.

Where possible, papers presented at Castan Centre events by guest speakers are posted on the website as soon as possible. There is also a human rights careers series section, with helpful hints from human rights practitio-

ners on how to get started.

Finally, the World Human Rights News page provides links to current news stories of interest from around the world.

The website can be accessed at www.law.monash.edu.au/castancentre