

Students Write Wrongs in Human Rights Essay Competition

By Anthony Capone

Monash University Law School, in conjunction with the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, is again conducting the *Writing for Human Rights* essay competition for Year 11 and 12 students. Young people from across Victoria are given the opportunity to engage in a current and contentious human rights topic, with an eye to raising awareness of human rights and generating discussion in schools.

In 2007, students will be discussing whether "freedom of speech has gone too far". Students may argue for or

against the statement, or can elect to examine both sides of the issue. The same topic will be the focus of argument between top Monash Law alumni at the 2007 Great Law Week Debate, to be held on 16 May. The debate is an annual event run in conjunction with the Law Institute of Victoria as part of Law Week (13 – 19 May) 2007.

Last year's competition sparked more than 100 entries from students all over Victoria and organisers are looking forward to even more entries this year. The judging panel from last year remarked that they were very impressed by the level of human rights

awareness and understanding reflected in the essays submitted. Tom Ballard, of Brauer College in Warrnambool, took out last year's top prize.

This year's winners will be invited to attend the Great Law Week Debate where they will be presented with their prizes.

The Monash University Law School and the Castan Centre look forward to another successful year of "human write-ing" that may inspire others to become involved in seeking justice and a fair go for all.

Castan Centre Torture Handbook Launched in Geneva

"Each act of torture and ill-treatment, inflicted by one human being upon another, permanently scars all those touched by it and destroys our sense of common humanity."

Manfred Nowak, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture.

In late November of 2006 Professor Sarah Joseph, Director of the Castan Centre and Katie Mitchell, Program Officer at the Castan Centre participated in the launch of "Seeking Remedies for Torture Victims: A Handbook on the Individual Complaints Procedures of the UN Treaty Bodies" at the University of Geneva. The handbook was co authored by Professor Sarah Joseph, Carin Benninger-Budel, Katie Mitchell and Linda Gyorki and is the fourth in a series published by the World Organisation Against Torture. The handbook aims to assist victims of torture by demystifying the jurisprudence and procedures of the UN Human Rights Committee, Committee Against Torture and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and thereby increasing access to justice.

An experienced panel of human rights experts spoke at the launch regarding various aspects of these UN bodies, including Professor Giorgio Malinverni



Carin Benninger-Budel, Katie Mitchell & Sarah Joseph at the book launch in Geneva

member of the U.N. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Markus Schmidt from the OHCHR, Boris Wijkström, OMCT Legal Advisor and the authors Professor Joseph and Ms Benninger-Budel.

The handbook series has been translated into French, Spanish, Arabic and Russian and represents a new set of

tools in the fight to eradicate torture and hold those who are responsible for such acts to account. The purpose of the handbook is to give a voice to victims, as stated by Manfred Nowak United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, in the foreword to the handbook "...the fight against torture and ill-treatment is fuelled and strengthened by the courage of those who speak out against it. These voices are critical to the struggle against torture and other forms of ill-treatment because they remove acts of torture from the darkness and bring them into the light, exposing them for what they are and seeking to hold those who perpetrate them accountable."

The Handbook can be purchased through the OMCT website (www.omct.org).



(L-R) Boris Wijkström, OMCT Legal Advisor (Series Editor), Markus Schmidt, OHCHR, Eric Sottas, Director of OMCT, Prof. Giorgio Malinverni Professor of Law University of Geneva & Member of the U.N. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights