

The Castan Centre celebrates

By Marius Smith

On a balmy Spring night recently, more than 330 supporters of the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law gathered to celebrate 10 years of achievement at Carousel in Melbourne.

For the Centre's broad constituency, the night was both a chance to celebrate the Centre's achievements and to catch up with friends and colleagues. Members of the legal profession, academia, the corporate world and the community sector were all well-represented in the audience to listen to guest speakers, the Centre's Director Professor Sarah Joseph, the Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG and Professor Patrick McGorry AO.

Professor Joseph opened the evening with a brief review of the Centre's beginnings and the current state of human rights in Australia. She noted that, although the advent of human rights acts in Victoria and the ACT were encouraging, many sections of Australian society still felt the sting of discrimination and deprivation. Professor Joseph then introduced Mr Kirby, who retired from the High Court in February 2009, to speak about the

life of Ron Castan AO QC, after whom the Centre is named. Ron is best known for his leading role in the landmark Mabo native title case, but he also appeared in many other native title and human rights cases, revitalised Liberty Victoria and played a role in founding the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. Mr Kirby referred to many of these achievements while painting a picture of the warm, passionate man that Ron was. He also spoke glowingly about the positive effect that the Castan Centre has had in creating a culture of human rights in Australia.

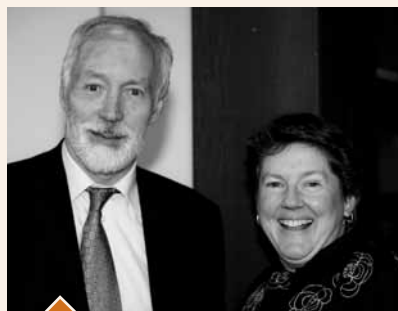
Professor McGorry, the 2010 Australian of the year, captured the room's imagination with his vision of a world class mental health system where those with mental health issues are not treated like second class citizens. He related the moving story of a woman diagnosed with cancer who received outstanding care before being



Michael Kirby AC CMG speaks about Ron Castan's legacy



Professor Patrick McGorry, 2010 Australian of the Year, gives the keynote address



Castan Centre Deputy Director Dr Paula Gerber and Professor Patrick McGorry



Castan Centre Deputy Director Dr Julie Debeljak announces the winners of the raffle



Castan Centre Director Sarah Joseph and Michael Kirby AC CMG following Mr Kirby's heart warming address on Ron Castan and the Centre

its 10th anniversary in style

turned away from the emergency department when she returned soon afterwards with severe depression. Professor McGorry repeated his call for governments to take the issue more seriously.

The other formal part of the evening was the presentation of Future Leaders' 2010 Future Justice awards by Justice Susan Kenny of the Federal Court. The major award was won by The Copenhagen Diagnosis, led by Professor Matthew England at the University of New South Wales.

The night wasn't all serious presentations on human rights. Young comedian Hannah Gadsby was master of ceremonies ("MC Hannah"), and she kept the audience chuckling between the formalities with anecdotes about growing up gay in Tasmania and her love of artificial lakes, which explained her time in Canberra and her fondness for that night's venue, on Albert Park Lake. All of that

was before Rob Lehrer and Steven Castan threw the switch to vaudeville for a very successful and amusing charity auction to wind up the evening.

With the 10th anniversary celebrations completed, the Centre's staff were happy that they could resume working on their ambitious plan to build a stronger culture of human rights in Australia. To that end, the funds raised by the dinner will be used for some of its most important projects, including the Accountability Project, which aims to hold governments responsible for their human rights obligations, and its Global Internship Project, which sends outstanding young law students to the world's leading human rights organisations.

For more on the centre's work, you can visit the website at www.law.monash.edu.au/castancentre.



Brian Walters SC and Katherine Teh White enjoying the entertainment at the dinner



Charity Auction item "Study for "A Simple Act"" sold during an exciting auction



Dr Helen Szoke, Commissioner, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, after her successful bid in the charity auction



Michael Kirby AC CMG and the Castan family pose for a photo