

2011 annual Castan Centre for Human Rights Law conference

An impressive line-up of speakers is guaranteed to inform, enlighten and encourage lively debate about domestic and international human rights issues at the Castan Centre's annual conference, *Human Rights 2011*. Topics to be explored this year include Indigenous rights, military justice, euthanasia, drugs and human rights, Islamophobia and the International Criminal Court.

Confirmed speakers include Mr Jeffrey L. Bleich, United States Ambassador to Australia, who will present on corporate social responsibility and the "right to connect", which is the right to use the internet and social media to exercise the freedoms of expression and (virtual) assembly. Professor Samina Yasmeen, Director of the Centre for Muslim States and Societies at the University of Western Australia, will discuss Islamophobia and Multicultural Australia, a topic which has received great attention in recent years.

Associate Professor Megan Davis and Mr Rex Wild QC will focus on indigenous rights. Associate Professor Davis, Director of the Indigenous Law Centre at the University of New South Wales and a member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, will examine how the Australian Constitution should recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. Mr Wild, Barrister and co-author (with Ms Patricia Anderson) of the *Little Children are Sacred* report into child abuse in the Northern Territory, will delve into Indigenous rights issues arising from the Northern Territory Intervention.

Brigadier Lyn McDade, Director of Military Prosecutions for the Australian Defence Force, will explore the topical issue of military justice and human rights. Professor Tim McCormack, Professor of Law at the Melbourne Law School and the Special Adviser on International Humanitarian Law to the prosecutor of the International

Criminal Court in the Hague will discuss some of the successes and challenges of the International Criminal Court.

Rounding out the line-up are Dr Alex Wodak AM, President of the Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation and Director of the Alcohol and Drug Service at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney and Dr Charlie Corke, the Senior Specialist in the Intensive Care Unit at Geelong Hospital, author of the book *Saving Lives* and subject of the recent documentary *In the End*. Dr Wodak will be speaking about a human rights approach to drugs, while Dr Corke will discuss the controversial topic of dysthanasia and euthanasia. Dysthanasia is the opposite of euthanasia, and means 'bad death', involving the concept of artificially postponing death.

You can register for the conference at www.law.monash.edu.au/castancentre/events/2011/conference-2011.html

Write about social media, win a social media device

Riding on the success of previous years, the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law is proud to announce the 2011 *Writing for Human Rights Secondary Schools Essay Competition*. This year's topic is 'Social media is free speech gone mad', a particularly relevant topic for the high school entrants who are part of the 'Facebook generation'. The competition is open to all Victorian secondary students in years 10, 11 and 12.

This topic was chosen due to widespread media coverage of some of the consequences of social media, often involving teenagers. Recent news of cyber-bullying, Facebook parties, offensive comments and employers accessing employees' social media pages illustrate how these new communication tools can greatly affect people's lives. Of course, social media has been prominently discussed in the international context as well: the recent revolutions in Egypt

and Tunisia relied partly on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to mobilise individuals and share information with the outside world.

Social media platforms have made it easier for individuals to express their opinions while remaining anonymous. Some people would suggest that social media is too unrestricted and that free speech on the internet should be limited. The point of the essays should be to explore whether restrictions should be placed on free speech expressed in social media platforms, and if so, which restrictions. The competition was launched at Monash Law's Great Law Week Debate on 18 May. The participants, who included Supreme Court judge the Honourable Lex Lasry QC and 2010 World Debating Championship winner Fiona Prowse, argued the same topic as the essay competition in front of a huge audience at the BMW Edge theatre at Federation Square.

Short-listed essays will be assessed by a panel of judges from the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law in July 2011. Due to generous support from Monash University's Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Education, the first prize winner will be awarded the new iPad 2 (64gb with wifi/3G) and two runners up will each receive the smaller iPad 2 (32gb with wifi/3G) at an awards ceremony. Additionally, the winning essay will be published in *Rapporteur*.

Information on the Writing for Human Rights Essay Competition is available at www.law.monash.edu.au/castancentre/cc-human-writes

Videos from the Great Law Week Debate will be available on the Castan Centre's YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/CastanCentre)