

International Conference on Human Rights in Closed Environments coming to Melbourne

Dr Julie Debeljak

On Monday 20 and Tuesday 21 February 2012 Monash University Law Chambers will host an international conference of eminent international and national speakers to examine how human rights are implemented in closed environments.

Where a person's liberty is restricted in closed environments, such as prisons, immigration detention, and closed psychiatric and disability settings, the potential for human rights abuses is high. The management of such environments requires a delicate balance between the rights of individuals on the one hand, and the safety and security of others in the closed environment and the broader community on the other. The project involves an evaluation of the role of formal human rights instruments in protecting the interests of persons in closed environments, with a view to developing practical guidance for staff and management in implementing human rights, and for monitoring and oversight bodies in their supervisory capacity.

The conference will bring together representatives from different jurisdictions and different sectors, operating under international, regional and domestic frameworks, to examine how human rights

are implemented and monitored in closed environments. It will provide an analysis of the comparative experiences of practical implementation of human rights in closed environments, as well as canvas current approaches to the national implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT), and the role of regulatory frameworks more broadly in facilitating human rights implementation. The merits and challenges of applying a human rights approach to closed settings will be explored, and the challenges to effecting culture change within such institutions will be discussed.

Plenary speakers include Professor Claudio Grossman, Dean of American University Washington College of Law, and Chair of the United Nations Committee against Torture; Dame Anne Owers, former Chief Inspector of Prisons (UK); Dr Ivan Zinger, Executive Director for the Office of the Correctional Investigator (Canada); Prof Richard Harding, University of Western Australia, and former Inspector of Custodial Services (WA); and The Association for the Prevention of Torture. Speakers in parallel sessions include Prof Ron McCallum, University of Sydney and Chair of the United Nations

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Prof Neil Morgan, Inspector of Custodial Services (WA); Dr Ruth Vine, Chief Psychiatrist, Department of Health, Victoria; David Manne, Refugee and Immigration Legal Centre, Victoria; the Australian Red Cross.

The Conference is an outcome of an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant entitled Applying Human Rights Legislation in Closed Environments: A Strategic Framework for Managing Compliance. This project began in 2009. Deputy Director of the Centre, Dr Julie Debeljak, is a Chief Investigator on the project, and her co-Chief Investigators are Professor Arie Frieberg, Dr Bronwyn Naylor, and Dr Stuart Thomas, as well as a Partner Investigator Dr Inez Dussuyer. The investigators are working in partnership with six collaborating organisations from a number of jurisdictions: Ombudsman Victoria, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Public Advocate, the Office of Police Integrity, the Commonwealth Ombudsman, and the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services in WA.

If you are interested in attending please contact Ellen Berah, at The Conference Organiser, (info@conorg.com.au).

Trafficking and Servitude Panel

Professor Susan Kneebone from the Law Faculty and Castan Centre spoke at the Human Trafficking and Servitude Panel Event jointly organised by the International Law Association (Vic) and Australian Lawyers for Human Rights on 26 July 2011. The other panellists were James Cheshire from the Australian Federal Police, Kristy Fleming from Child Wise (www.childwise.net) and Nick Goodfellow from SISHA Anti-Human Trafficking and Exploitation (<http://www.sisha.org/>). The Panel was well-chaired by Jonathan Kelp.

Each of the panelists, who were provided in advance with a detailed set of questions and issues to address, brought unique perspectives to the issue. Mr. Cheshire heads the AFP's Melbourne Human

Trafficking Team. Ms. Fleming is the International Child Protection Program Manager for Child Wise Lawyer with the criminal prosecution service in Australia. She previously worked with the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Trafficking in Women and Children in the Mekong Sub-region (the UNIAP) in Cambodia. Mr. Goodfellow is a lawyer with the SISHA criminal prosecution service in Australia and with the UN in Cambodia. He previously worked as a lawyer at the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in The Hague. He has had experience prosecuting a wide range of crimes including sexual offences involving both adult and child victims. Professor Kneebone has recently completed a book co-authored with Dr Julie Debeljak arising from a project on

human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) which began in 2006.

Mr. Cheshire provided an overview of his role within the AFP and of patterns of human trafficking into Australia; Ms. Fleming spoke about the incidence of sexual exploitation of children in Australia and the region; Mr Goodfellow provided an overview of the challenges in prosecuting trafficking offences in Cambodia; and Professor Kneebone gave a summary of the international legal framework for tackling trafficking and provided an overview of human trafficking in the GMS.

The Event was extremely well attended and provoked a lively set of questions and discussion with the audience.