

Meet some of our in-house interns

The Castan Centre relies significantly on the invaluable work done by in-house interns who share their time and skills with us full time over the summer and winter breaks as well as part time during semester. Meet a few of them...

Ruvini Leitan

What was your best experience while working with the Castan Centre?

One assignment I found particularly interesting was investigating the treatment of homosexuality and LGBTI rights in the Australian Defence Force, with the aim of identifying redress for negative treatment. It was challenging research with an important practical objective, which is the kind of exciting work that the Castan Centre specialises in.

Any advice for future interns?

Keeping an open mind is the best approach to this internship - you probably won't have background knowledge about every task you work on, but it's a great chance to hone your research and analytical skills and learn something new. The internship is also a really great chance to support and learn from some of the best academics working in human rights, so ask lots of questions too.

Stephanie Sprott

Why are you interested in Human Rights?

I am interested in human rights because it provides a method for marginalised groups in society to achieve equality. The diversity of experiences inherent to our society has led to significant power imbalances. Human rights law is exciting as it helps put everyone on a level playing field.

What are your plans for the future?

I would like to be involved in community legal education and advocacy projects. At some point in the future I would probably like to obtain a Masters Degree in international human rights law, and perhaps do some work overseas. I believe that the provision of an advocacy platform to marginalised groups at a grass roots level is very important, so if I could work in an area that does this I would be very excited.

Josephine Langbien

What human rights issues are you most interested in?

I feel particularly strongly about the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees, as this is one of the areas in which I believe Australia most blatantly disregards its international and human rights obligations. I am also interested in the experiences of women in conflict situations and more broadly, and I am passionate about gender equality.

What was your best experience while working with the Castan Centre?

I especially enjoyed being involved in the preparation of the Castan Centre's submission to the National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention, currently being conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission. We undertook extensive research to inform the submission and it was very rewarding to see our work put to use in such a significant context.

Georgina Bitcon

Why are you interested in Human Rights?

I am interested in Human Rights Law as it establishes a baseline for individual liberties that creates an international community of support.

What was your best experience while working with the Castan Centre?

Ruvini and I worked on a project researching LGBTI rights standards abroad. I really enjoyed this project because we were able to discover fascinating information about countries I had not known a great deal about before.

What are your plans for the future?

I am currently completing my degree at the Monash Prato Centre in Italy. Upon finishing my studies, I hope to gain further experience in the field of Human Rights and public interest law. Who knows what the future holds!

Students who are interested in being an in-house intern or participating in one of our other student programs should go to www.law.monash.edu.au/castancentre/for-students



Four questions for:
New Castan
Centre Project
Officer

Sarah Austin

What did you do before working at the centre?

I finished my law degree in 2008 and after that worked in events until I took up this position. Even though I haven't been working full time in the law I have stayed involved through completing my Post Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice, working as research assistant and volunteering at Monash-Oakleigh CLC. I'm starting my Masters later this year and am diving head first back into the law!

How are you finding the job so far?

Brilliant! The work is interesting and varied, you always have multiple balls in the air. My favourite aspects so far have been interviewing our event speakers as well as learning video editing (but maybe not the week I spent on the phone with IT trying to get the software installed on a disagreeable computer!).

What interests you about human rights?

I think how they are on one hand so fundamental and undeniable, but there is simultaneously so much debate around them; what human rights are, whether particular rights exist or not, how can they be expressed, which ones are more 'important' than others and what actions governments, corporations and individuals should take to protect and promote them.

Human rights law considers what human beings are, what we need to live and have a satisfying life, how we want our society to be (and who gets to decide that) and looks at both the best and worst of our experiences.

Which area of human rights law are you most passionate about and why?

It would have to be women's rights both locally and internationally. I struggle to comprehend that billions of women around the world have to live with institutionalised systems preferring men over women for no reason other than biological sex. Being denied the right to drive, vote in elections, own property or access education, forced marriages for girls who have not even reached puberty, rape as a weapon of war, honour killings, sex-selective infanticide, unequal pay for equal work and lack of access to birth control or safe and legal abortion are just part of the picture for girls and women globally.