

I welcome you to the eighth edition of the *Court of Conscience*.

2014 is a year of many firsts for our award-winning publication. This year's Issue features our first ever 'Special Issue' devoted to the theme: 'Access to Justice'. It is timely; the Productivity Commission is in the process of undertaking a mammoth 15-month inquiry into Access to Justice Arrangements, including a period of public consultation (for which the UNSW Law Society made a submission).

We were also proud to introduce the peer review process to the *Court of Conscience* this year. This process provided expert feedback to all our submitters, which they could engage with to improve the quality of their submissions. It is also hoped the introduction of this important academic process further improves the academic prestige of this important publication. This Issue continues the *Court of Conscience's* proud tradition of providing a space for academics, lawyers, and, importantly, talented students of UNSW Law to engage their interest in social justice, and hopefully inspire readers to do the same.

A warning: many articles in this Issue are a sobering read. I was struck by a VicHealth study, cited in Graeme Innes' wonderful article, which found that 90 per cent of Australian women with an intellectual disability had experienced sexual abuse in their lives. This is truly staggering. But awareness is the first step. It is hoped that by highlighting barriers to access to justice, this Issue will contribute to the national debate on access to justice and equality before the law. We will consider this publication a success if the words contained here inspire our readers to commit to improving our civil and criminal justice system.

My special thanks to the outstanding Editorial Team for their tireless work in seeing this Issue to fruition. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Giridhar Kowtal
Editor-in-Chief
Court of Conscience 2014
UNSW Law Society