



Mark Steele is Unreal

In November 2013 baby Ferouz Myuddin was born in Brisbane after his mother was transferred from immigration detention in Nauru as a result of medical concerns associated with her pregnancy.

After baby Ferouz's birth the Myuddin family became embroiled in a lengthy legal battle with the federal government, arguing that baby Ferouz was entitled to apply for a protection visa because he was born in Australia. In 2014 the case of baby Ferouz made headlines across Australia and throughout the world and drew sharp attention to Australia's practice of mandatory detention of asylum seekers, particularly children.

On 13 February 2015 baby Ferouz's pro bono legal team, including former Darwin lawyer Mark Steele were awarded the 2015 Australian Lawyers Alliance ("ALA") Queensland Civil Justice Award at the ALA Queensland State Conference as an acknowledgement for their work on the case.

Although the proceedings lodged on behalf of baby Ferouz were dismissed, they inspired change, developed public awareness and ultimately achieved a positive outcome for the Myuddin family and baby Ferouz. In presenting the award ALA Queensland President Michelle James said the lawyers made numerous direct representations at the highest political and media levels on behalf of the family. "The baby Ferouz case was a landmark case for two reasons: firstly, it led to 31 babies being released from detention and gave them the legal right to seek temporary protection in Australia. Further, it played an historic role in giving a face to the many hundreds of children still living in detention centres today. This case blew open the national debate once again to demand a fair go for people escaping

violence and persecution who seek a better life for their families in Australia." said Ms James.

Darwin-born Steele was admitted to the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory in 2000. He worked for Clayton Utz in Darwin and Perth between 2000 and 2003 before moving to Brisbane where he worked for Blake Dawson Waldron. He joined the independent Bar in 2005 where he practices primarily in commercial law, estates and succession and building and administrative law.

Together with two senior counsel, junior counsel and a team of solicitors, Steele was involved in arguing a number of applications and appeals on behalf of baby Ferouz. These included seeking urgent injunctions to stop the family being transferred to Nauru, challenges to the *Migration Act* and lodging a citizenship application on behalf of baby Ferouz.

Baby Ferouz and his family were freed from immigration detention in Darwin in January 2015, having been detained since Ferouz's birth 14 months earlier. Of that Ms James said, "With most legal and parliamentary avenues exhausted, such an outcome was only made possible on account of the significant groundswell of support for Ferouz and his family from the broader Australian public. This support was built through the constant efforts of Ferouz's parents and legal team, which never gave up highlighting the plight of baby Ferouz and all babies living in detention."

Law Society Northern Territory congratulates Mark Steele and baby Ferouz's entire legal team on being awarded the ALA Queensland Civil Justice Award. ●