

Castan Centre People

Meet Some of Our In-House Interns

This year, our In-House Internship Program hosted 21 Monash Law students, and five students from other Australian and international universities. Some of them spoke to Erica Contini about their time with us.

Jonathan Devenish

What was your motivation for volunteering with us?

I have really enjoyed the human rights electives I have taken at Monash and I wanted to become involved in a more practical way. Also, before I began my degree at Monash I had heard of the Castan Centre and its reputation in the area of human rights. This was one of the reasons why I applied to do my degree at Monash in the first place.

What inspires you about human rights?

The enormous level of inequality that still exists in the world.

Tell us about your work experience

I have done volunteer work in Africa in the area of aid and development.

Senthuren Mahendren

What inspires or drives you about human rights?

Human rights offer the potential to impact so many in a positive way. They are fundamental rights which everybody deserves and to deprive people of these rights is unjust and wrong.

Tell us about your work experience

I have volunteered for Springvale Monash Legal Clinic, Public Interest Law Clearing House and VYO. I also write for Tamil Manifest radio show on 3CR.

What do you hope to do in the future?

I would love to someday join an NGO in the future to be able to use my commercial skills together with an interest and knowledge in the field of human rights to make a difference.

Jian Voon

What was your motivation for volunteering with us?

I have always had a general interest in human rights, as it deals with some of

the most controversial/interesting/taboo subjects. When I heard about an internship that surrounded human rights law, I took up the opportunity.

What did you do during your internship?

For the first couple of days I had a range of tasks, such as writing letters to various human rights activists, proof-reading articles, searching for relevant human rights articles to put on the Castan Centre website, etc. However, the bulk of my internship consisted of co-writing a submission for a government inquiry regarding immigration detention. This involved discussing any current problems with Australia's immigration policy (basically...everything) and proposing alternatives for change.

Christopher Liaskos

What was your motivation for undertaking the internship?

I was excited at the prospect of gaining experience at the Castan Centre due to my passion for human rights and long-term goal of working in a human rights institute. In addition, I have always admired the remarkable work that the Castan Centre does in promoting human rights around the world and sought to contribute to that through an in-house internship.

What inspires you about human rights?

I am inspired by the important role human rights play in conferring to all people fundamental protections and entitlements that ensure that they lead a dignified life. I consider this to be the noblest of human pursuits.

Tell us about your work experience

I currently volunteer at both Monash Oakleigh and Springvale Monash Legal Services. Gaining practical legal experience within community legal centers is something I enjoy very much as it combines my two passions in life; the law and social work.

What do you hope to do in the future?

After completing my law degree in mid-2009, I hope to travel abroad during the second half of the year before returning to commence articles and a career in law.

Sophie Herreen

What was your motivation for volunteering with us?

After studying international human rights law, I was interested in learning more about human rights generally, and available career options in this area more specifically. I saw the internship as an opportunity to determine what it would be like to work in this field. I also saw it as an opportunity to enhance my understanding of human rights-related issues and debates, and to become more informed about these. Finally, I was keen to improve my research and legal writing skills.

What inspires you about human rights?

I believe that protecting human rights around the world is of fundamental importance. I believe that the law can - and should - be used, both at the international and domestic level, to better protect people's rights in all aspects of life. My particular interest is discrimination law.

What did you do during your internship?

I helped prepare submissions to Parliament on the effectiveness of the Sex Discrimination Act and the proposed Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Laws Bill. I also wrote case notes on a number of Human Rights Committee decisions and conducted other human-rights related research.

What do you hope to do in the future?

Ideally, I'd like to work in the area of policy development or law reform.

Seven Questions for...

New Castan Centre Associate Heli Askola

Finnish academic Heli Askola joined the Monash Law faculty at the beginning of 2008. In addition to her interest in European Union law, Heli has a strong interest in various facets of human rights law, resulting in her appointment as a Castan Centre Associate. She recently spoke with Erica Contini about human rights, the law and travelling.

What area of human rights law are you the most passionate about?

I am particularly interested in the rights of migrants, especially irregular migrants, the rights of women and girls, and the effects of economic globalization on human rights. Often my research combines these areas – for instance trafficked people are often irregular migrants, trafficking predominantly affects women and girls and the whole phenomenon of human trafficking is in some ways a complicated side effect of globalization.

What did you do prior to coming to Monash?

Before joining Monash, I was lecturing at Cardiff Law School in the UK. I moved to Wales after having finished my PhD at the European University Institute in Florence in 2005. I'm originally from Finland but ended up moving to Italy to do my PhD on European regional responses to trafficking in human beings. In fact for my PhD I ended up making extended visits to several European countries – Europe is such a diverse continent that doing comparative research requires you to become a bit of a country-hopper!

Speaking of which, you have just returned from a conference in Buenos Aires, what did you present on?

I gave a presentation on the human rights abuses involved in human trafficking and also participated in a panel discussion about the recent global efforts to coordinate the legal responses to migrants' labour exploitation. While the discussions were interesting, I probably enjoyed the lavish cocktail party afterwards even more!

Do you enjoy living in Melbourne?

I love Melbourne – but I have to say



this winter really made me miss double-glazing and properly insulated houses.

If you could give students one piece of advice, what would that be?

Don't feel you have to follow the crowd, think for yourself!

What is your favourite sport and why is it your favourite?

Being Finnish, I feel sort of obliged to say ice hockey – although I am not really into sports. I think it's Noam Chomsky who said sport offers people something to pay attention to that's of no importance, that keeps them from worrying about things that matter to their lives that they might have some idea of doing something about. I think there are more important things out there than footy (but I know I am probably in the minority...).

If you could bring one aspect of Finland to Melbourne...what would that be?

The sauna. Of course.

Our Directors

Centre Director Sarah Joseph and the centre's five deputy directors are undertaking various extra-curricular activities.

Sarah Joseph gave a paper in Samoa, presented at workshops on corporate social responsibility in Yogyakarta for the Norwegian Centre on Human Rights, and gave seminars on investment in human rights at the Academy of International Trade Law, Macau. She also delivered a postgraduate human rights course at the University of Auckland and taught at Monash.

Melissa Castan is continuing research and writing on developments in international law relating to Indigenous people, and preparing to teach Comparative Indigenous Rights with colleagues in Ottawa, Oklahoma and Auckland in February and March 2009. She is also continuing her work with the Alternative Law Journal.

Julie Debeljak is currently on long service leave and will be returning to work in January 2009.

Paula Gerber was recently awarded a grant from the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights to write a paper on education as a means of preventing human rights abuses. Paula is writing articles and book chapters in animal law, construction law and human rights education. Paula will be on maternity leave in second semester 2009.

Susan Kneebone was recently granted a three-year Australian Research Council grant for a project on the regulation of labour migration in South East Asia. Susan recently gave evidence before a parliamentary committee on immigration detention and finished her upcoming book *Refugees, Asylum Seekers and the Rule of Law: Comparative Perspectives*.

Adam McBeth is co-editing *Research Handbook on Human Rights* with Professor Joseph and writing his own book on international economic actors and human rights.