

### Centre Associate launches new book

A new book by Castan Centre Associate Dr Ronli Sifris provides an important new insight into a feminist understanding of international human rights. The book, *Reproductive Freedom, Torture and International Human Rights: Challenging the Masculinisation of Torture*, was launched in March by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria, Marilyn Warren. It examines restrictions on reproductive freedom through the lens of the right to be free from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Dr Sifris said the book challenges the traditional notions of torture, as it deconstructs the meaning of torture from a feminist perspective. "There is a myopic view that torture only takes place within the traditional paradigm of interrogation, punishment or intimidation of a detainee," Dr Sifris said. "This often prioritises the experiences of men over those of women, given that

the pain and suffering from which women disproportionately suffer occurs in situations outside of the context of these standard definitions, such as in circumstances of intimate partner violence. My book focuses on restrictions on reproductive freedom within the framework of the right to be free from torture."

Dr Sifris is an Associate of the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law. She received her LLB from Monash University where she was awarded the Supreme Court Prize for graduating first in her class and was the editor of the Monash University Law Review. She completed an LLM in International Legal Studies as a Hauser Scholar at NYU School of Law and a PhD at Monash University. Prior to commencing her PhD she worked as a consultant with the International Center for Transitional Justice in New York.



Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria, Marilyn Warren and Castan Centre Associate, Ronli Sifris

### Comings and goings at the Castan Centre

The Castan Centre welcomed Sarah Austin as its new Project Officer in March this year. Sarah, who finished her undergraduate law degree at Monash in 2008, had previously showed her skills as a long-term researcher on the Centre's human rights case note collaboration with Oxford University Press. The project, which requires the Centre to create a case note for every substantive complaint heard by one of the United Nations' treaty bodies, allowed Sarah to hone her human rights law knowledge. Sarah replaces Grace Jennings-Edquist who scored a highly sought after writing role with *Mamma Mia* in Sydney late last year.

Since arriving, Sarah has been thrown in the deep end, helping to edit the Castan Human Rights Report while assisting on the Human Rights in 3 Minutes project, editing a backlog of videos and managing the Centre's social media platforms. She has also taken the lead in editing this newsletter while handling all of those other little tasks that inevitably pop up along the way. Sarah has settled in well and will hopefully be with us for a long time to come. You can read more about her in the "Four Questions for..." feature on page 11.

Just as Sarah is finding her feet, our Administrator Janice Hugo is taking leave as she prepares for the birth of her first child. Janice has been with the Centre since 2010 when she had a baptism of fire in the lead up to our first gala dinner in October of that year. She has since become adept at the huge range of tasks thrown her way on a daily basis. Now, as we prepare to host our third biennial dinner, she is handing the duties over to Simone Heane, who will take over for Janice during her absence. Simone has been working with Monash University in the Faculty of Biomedical Science for a number of years and we are looking forward to having her at the Centre during Janice's absence.

### Centre Deputy Director wins VCAT Award

The VCAT Author Award was presented by The Honourable Justice Garde, President of VCAT, to Castan Centre Deputy Director Dr Paula Gerber in March this year. VCAT gave this award in recognition of her outstanding contribution as an author and to the community of Victoria in both human rights and construction law. Dr Gerber has written recent books on both resolution of commercial disputes and human rights education as well as numerous articles and submissions to parliament.

This is the second time VCAT has awarded the Author Award, which is only open to VCAT members. The inaugural award was awarded to Senior Member Russell Byard in March 2013, for his contribution as an author within planning and environment law.

Dr Gerber has been a member and mediator in the Civil Division of VCAT for 9 years and was thrilled to have her work recognised and appreciated outside of purely academic circles. She said "for an organisation such as VCAT to respect and appreciate the value of my research and writing suggests that my work is having an impact, and that is what I think all researchers ultimately want".



Justice Garde, presenting Castan Centre Deputy Director Paula Gerber with her award