

**Castan Centre
2016 Impact Report**

**MONASH
CASTAN CENTRE
FOR HUMAN
RIGHTS LAW**

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CASTAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

2016 IMPACT REPORT

As world-renowned human rights experts, we believe that we have a responsibility to help create a more just world where human rights are respected and protected, allowing people to pursue their lives in freedom and with dignity.

As this report shows, our innovative approach to influencing policy makers and educating the public has enabled us to contribute to tangible outcomes for the most vulnerable Australians in 2016; and our success is inspiring us to increase our strategic focus in 2017 and beyond. We also have an eye on the long term: our work is continually building public support for future change and creating the leaders who will help to make it happen.

INCREASING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR CHANGE

As an innovative, dynamic human rights centre, we are constantly using new communications techniques to spread the word about human rights.

The headline numbers are impressive – we reached approximately 6.5 million people through social media, had over 230,000 people visit our websites and were mentioned in 601 media stories. We held 11 events with an average attendance of 155. But those figures only tell part of the story.

Social media reach: 6.5 million people

Website views: 232,000

Media mentions: 601

Average event attendance: 155

Public events

We bring all of our communications tools together to get our message out to as many people as possible. For example, our 2016 annual conference attracted 310 people to hear broadcaster Stan Grant, Black Lives Matter activist Tory Russell and many more. Attendees tweeted using the hashtag '#humanrights16', which in turn drew interest from thousands in Australia and around the world. As a result, we trended number one on Twitter and reached over **1.7 million** people on the day. Subsequently, the speeches have been watched almost 4000 times on YouTube, spreading the speakers' important messages even further.

To create this 'halo effect', we use this model of attracting large audiences, live tweeting and making the video footage available afterwards for all of our events.



Broadcaster Stan Grant speaks at the 2016 conference

Media

We were approached by the media to speak on many issues in 2016, including refugees, LGBTI rights, domestic violence, self-determination and more. The highlight of the year was the release of our report on the Government's 'Closing the Gap' goals, which found that they had created few positive impacts on Indigenous peoples' lives in the Northern Territory.

The report gained considerable mainstream media coverage and helped publicise the centre's aim of adding a Closing the Gap goal to reduce the catastrophic rates of incarceration of Indigenous Australians. We are continuing to work on highlighting imprisonment rates and conditions in Australia.



Coverage of the Centre's Northern Territory Intervention report by The Guardian

STRENGTHENING HUMAN RIGHTS

Using our world-renowned academic expertise, we contributed to major human rights reforms around the country.

Refugees and asylum seekers

We played instrumental roles in convincing Australia's parliament not to proceed with two laws harmful to asylum seekers. The first would have imposed a lifetime ban on asylum seekers in offshore detention centres from applying for Australian visas, and the second would have prevented the weakening of a law protecting asylum seekers from being returned to danger. We also made a submission to a Parliamentary inquiry into abuse in offshore detention and worked continually in public to highlight the harm caused by asylum policies.

Children with disability

In September 2016, the Centre received a landmark grant from the Legal Services Board to review how children with disability are educated in Victoria. As part of the project, we will visit ten schools to interview principals, teachers and parents. We will make recommendations to improve classroom experiences for children with disability, which will in turn strengthen their career and life prospects in adulthood. We will deliver the final report to the State Government in mid-2018.

Indigenous prisoners

To address research showing that a lack of education and positive role models contributes to higher incarceration rates for Indigenous Australians, the Centre launched a new project to connect Indigenous prisoners with Indigenous university students. The weekly homework club at Port Phillip Prison has had immediate positive benefits on prisoners, who have reported improved self-esteem and behaviour. The Centre is now working with other organisations to create better post-release pathways for program participants.



Members of the Indigenous Prison Homework Club outside Port Phillip Prison

Expungement of consensual homosexual sex convictions

Following our key role in propelling Victoria towards expungement of historic convictions for consensual homosexual sex, we provided advice and feedback to the Tasmanian and Queensland governments as they work to finalise their own legislation to redress these historic wrongs. We expect to see legislation in both jurisdictions passed in 2017.

Human rights laws in Australia

It was no coincidence that Victoria's government delivered its review of the state's human rights charter at the Castan Centre's 2016 conference, a recognition of the key role we played in the review. We have since been consulted about how best to put the review into action, and we expect to see laws passed in 2017. We also lent our voice to efforts to convince Queensland's government to implement a human rights law.

Use of force in detention

In the wake of the allegations of abuse at the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre, a multi-disciplinary team of Castan Centre legal academics is reviewing laws on the use of force and restraint in prisons, juvenile detention centres, immigration detention centres, psychiatric facilities and more. In mid-2017, we will publish the results to help engender systemic change in Australia to better protect the rights of often extremely vulnerable people.

Other policy work

Over the past year, we have advised the federal parliament on how to campaign for the worldwide abolition of the death penalty; helped to make laws allowing for revocation of citizenship more human rights compliant; and made submissions to the Victorian parliament on assisted reproduction and to the Commonwealth government on surrogacy. We also provided advice to the United Nations on the right to development, biodiversity and human rights and the environment.



The Castan Centre Annual Conference 2016, Melbourne Federation Square

EDUCATING THE HUMAN RIGHTS LEADERS OF TOMORROW

Many of our 200 plus former interns have become human rights change makers and leaders over the past 16 years.

In 2016, we mentored 41 students through our Global Internships, In-House Internships, mooted program and Indigenous prison homework club.

Our flagship Global Internship Program sent five outstanding women to some of the world's leading human rights organisations, including our Indigenous Intern to the United Nations, Madelaine King. Since moving from Tasmania, Madelaine – a Monash medical student – has tutored asylum seekers and refugees, worked with Doctors for the Environment and the Australian Youth Climate Coalition and received the prestigious John Flynn Placement Program scholarship, which promotes rural and Indigenous health. Like Vanessa Zimmerman before her, Madelaine will intern with the Australian Government's permanent mission to the UN in Geneva.

In 2016, our in-house interns contributed over 2000 hours of pro bono work. Their research was instrumental to our comprehensive review of the use of force in Australia, and they made significant contributions to most of our key policy work. Without them, we would not have achieved so much.



Madelaine King, the 2017 Bennelong Foundation Indigenous Intern to the UN

Former intern proves the value of our mentoring



Vanessa Zimmerman, 2002 Castan Centre Global Intern)

In 2002, Vanessa Zimmerman's life changed when she undertook one of the Castan Centre's first Global Internships, at the Geneva-based then UN Commission on Human Rights. "Put simply, the Castan Centre helped to give me the knowledge, networks and confidence to pursue a career in human rights", said Vanessa recently.

Working with the Australian Government's delegation to the Commission (since replaced by the Human Rights Council), Vanessa attended multilateral negotiations, reported and researched on a range of human rights issues and even spoke on behalf of Australia before the Commission.

Like so many former Global Interns, Vanessa has since embarked on a stellar career. After her internship, Vanessa worked in commercial law and completed a master's degree at Harvard Law School before landing a position as Legal Advisor to the UN Special Representative on Business and Human Rights in Boston. Now back in Melbourne, she is Group Human Rights Advisor for Rio Tinto, helping the company to implement the internationally recognised UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

"I am honoured to have been one of the Castan Centre's first global interns. It was invaluable to see the international human rights system working in practice and to better understand what skills and experience I would need to start a human rights career."

Vanessa was recognised in the 2016 Australian Financial Review & Westpac 100 Women of Influence Awards for her key voice on human rights and business, which is also a Castan Centre priority. "The Castan Centre's work has been important for all stakeholders including business, government and civil society" said Vanessa, who recently joined the Centre's advisory board.

HOW OUR DONORS HELP TO CREATE CHANGE

The Castan Centre raises 90% of its income from outside the University, thanks to support from a mix of individuals, foundations and corporate supporters, and revenue from events and consulting.

We also relied on 3,115 hours of pro bono support from students, academics and lawyers in 2016, helping us to achieve our wide-ranging policy priorities.

The great thing is that our University support enables every cent you donate to go to the Centre's policy, public education and student programs. The University does not receive any of your donation, and your money does not go to overheads such as rent and utilities. Your donation can have a truly transformative effect on human rights by supporting one of the most innovative and dynamic university centres in this country.



FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about anything contained in this report please contact:

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