



Welcome to this first e-mail update on the activities of the [Gilbert + Tobin Centre for Public Law](#) at the University of New South Wales. Although we will continue to produce a bi-annual newsletter in January and July of each year, we also want to keep friends of the Centre apprised of what has been happening here in the meantime – and also what is coming up.

Since our last Newsletter the Centre has hosted a number of events, the main one being its annual Constitutional Law Conference which was held for the first time at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney. The conference attracted over 200 participants who met to discuss developments in the High Court and other Australian courts during 2008. A selection of papers presented on the day is available at <http://www.gtcentre.unsw.edu.au/publications/papers/469.asp> as well as questions and answers from the High Court trivia quiz held that night at the conference dinner. Our special guest speaker for the dinner at NSW Parliament House was Commonwealth Attorney-General, the Hon Robert McClelland, whose speech can be found at: http://www.gtcentre.unsw.edu.au/news/docs/2009ConLawConf_Atorney-General_Speech.pdf.

The final session of the conference was a panel discussion titled 'Australian Constitutional Futures' featuring Centre Project Director [Sean Brennan](#), Mr Ian Callinan AC, Mr Mark Dreyfus QC MP and Professor Helen Irving. The discussion was moderated by Mr Damien Carrick, host of ABC Radio National's *Law Report*. A webcast of this session is available at: <http://www.gtcentre.unsw.edu.au/webcast/469.asp>.

On 19 February the Centre, with the Australian Human Rights Commission convened a meeting of the [Australian Human Rights Group](#) to discuss ways of contributing to the present [National Human Rights Consultation](#) on the protection of rights in Australia. This roundtable was well timed, bringing together 50 human rights experts to put forward their ideas on contributing to this debate. Later in February, the Centre again worked closely with the Commission to hold a workshop for community organisations on writing submissions for law reform bodies. Although the workshop covered submission writing generally, its immediate aim was to assist those organisations interested in preparing a submission for the National Human Rights Consultation.

Since January, Centre members have actively contributed to debate on important issues of public law through the media pieces, speaking engagements and formal

submissions to inquiries. The topics on which members have contributed have included:

- the lessons from the [Haneef affair as uncovered by the Clarke Inquiry](#);
- the constitutional challenge launched against the Commonwealth's impending [economic stimulus payment](#) and the possibility of one against the [Murray River scheme](#);
- the Greens Bill on a [Plebiscite for a Republic](#);
- the winding up of detention at [Guantanamo Bay](#);
- the impacts of [climate change](#) on human movement in the Southwest Pacific;
- new [State police powers](#) based upon anti-terrorism laws;
- and, of course, the prospects of a national Charter of Rights (on which see several entries in our [News archive](#)).

A brief list of recent highlights includes:

- The Centre has grown with three new academic staff arriving in the Faculty with the new start of the New Year:
 - [Dr Ben Golder](#) holds undergraduate law and English literature degrees from UNSW and a doctorate in legal theory from the University of London. Prior to joining the faculty, Ben taught law at the University of East London, University College London, Birkbeck College and New York University in London;
 - [Professor Theunis Roux](#) joins us from the [South African Institute for Advanced Constitutional, Public Human Rights and International Law \(SAIFAC\)](#), of which he was the Founding Director; Theunis is also the out-going Secretary-General of the [International Association of Constitutional Law](#);
 - [Paul Kildea](#) has started work at the Centre as the new Director of our [Federalism Project](#). Paul researches and teaches in both law and politics and has been completing his PhD thesis in the School of Politics at UNSW on 'Public Engagement in Constitutional Reform in Australia'.
- Additionally, the Centre's [Charter of Human Rights project](#) is currently being assisted by Francine Johnson and Julie Walsh both on three days a week secondment from Gilbert + Tobin and Mallesons Stephen Jaques respectively. We thank both law firms for their generous support of this project and are very glad to have the help of both Francine and Julie during the first half of this year;
- [Associate Professor Jane McAdam](#), Director of the Centre's [International Refugee and Migration Law Project](#), and four international colleagues have won a research grant from the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council International Opportunities Fund. The research project is entitled 'War Crimes and Refugee Status: The Application and Interpretation of International Humanitarian and International Criminal Law to the Adjudication of Refugee Status in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand';
- Additionally, based on her expertise in the area, Jane has been appointed as an advisor to the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#) on the international law dimensions of climate-induced displacement;

- New Centre member Ben Golder, with Peter Fitzpatrick, has published [Foucault's Law](#), the first book in almost fifteen years to address the question of Foucault's position on law with Routledge Press; and
- [Ed Santow](#), Director of the Charter of Human Rights Project, and Francine Johnson have released a [major position paper](#) on the ramifications of a Charter for the Australian business sector.

Finally, I end with a reminder about an event we are hosting in collaboration with the [Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies of Law](#) on 1 April. Spaces are still available at an evening seminar on [Courts and Constitutional Change: South Africa, Hungary, Australia](#). The trio of speakers are our new colleague [Professor Theunis Roux](#); [Associate Professor Renata Uitz](#) (Chair of the Comparative Constitutional Law program at the Central European University) and the Hon [Michael Kirby](#), AC CMG, newly appointed as a Visiting Professorial Fellow at UNSW. If you are able to attend, please just email rsvplaw@unsw.edu.au.

Dr Andrew Lynch
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