Welcome to the March 2011 e-bulletin of the Gilbert + Tobin Centre of Public Law. Since publication of our last Newsletter in January, Centre members have been busy with several events, including the 2011 Constitutional Law Conference and Dinner, as well as continuing their teaching and research in the field of public law.

Events/Seminars

On 18 February 2011 the Centre hosted its annual event on Constitutional Law, looking at developments in the High Court and other Australian courts in 2010 and beyond. This year marked a milestone for this event, being the 10th anniversary since it was first held. The conference attracted a record number of registrants and the dinner that evening at NSW Parliament House was addressed by Hon Justice Patrick Keane, Chief Justice of the Federal Court of Australia who spoke on ‘Originalism: Founders, Judges and Modesty’.

A number of papers and a webcast of the entire proceedings are now available at http://www.gtccentre.unsw.edu.au/content/2011-constitutional-law-conference-and-dinner.

On 24-25 March the Centre held a Federalism Roundtable as part of its Federalism Project. The theme for this Roundtable was ‘Mechanisms of Federal Reform’, and focused on the processes and institutions that contribute to change in Australia’s federal system. The aim of the Roundtable was to prompt an interdisciplinary discussion among academics and practitioners about how change occurs (or might occur) in the federal system, rather than about specific reform priorities. The papers from this event will soon appear as an edited collection published by Federation Press.

This semester sees the continuation of the Public Law and Legal Theory seminar series which commenced on 11 March with a presentation by Stuart Elden, Professor of Political Geography at Durham University. Professor Elden spoke on ‘The Birth of Territory’, providing an overview of a project tracing the emergence of territory in Western political thought, suggesting that territory is far more complicated than modern scholarship would have us believe, and should be interrogated as word, concept and practice.
Activities and Research

Over the last three months Centre members have contributed to debate on various public law issues through formal submissions and media and speaking engagements. Topics on which members have contributed include:

- The right of asylum seekers to complementary protection;
- The significance of socio-economic factors to development of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan under the Water Act 2007;
- The federal veto over ACT laws;
- The crisis in Libya and Security Council involvement;
- Reform of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG); and
- The annual statistical breakdown of High Court levels of unanimity and dissent (featured in the Sydney Morning Herald and The Australian).

Particular highlights over recent months include:

- Paul Kildea and George Williams spoke at an Indigenous Law Centre Open Forum on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Peoples;
- Nicola McGarrity was interviewed about Australia’s anti-terrorism laws as part of the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Pod Rights series;
- Jane McAdam was one of 20 people invited experts at a meeting on climate change and displacement convened by the UNHCR in Bellagio, Italy. Jane also trained New Zealand lawyers on complementary protection under NZ’s new Immigration Act in Auckland in March;
- Andrew Lynch gave advice and research to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation committee in concluding its report on the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Bills 2010;
- George Williams, Sean Brennan and Andrew Lynch produced the first Case Supplements to the 5th edition of Blackshield & Williams’ Australian Constitutional Law – Law and Theory. The cases featured are Rowe v Electoral Commissioner and South Australia v Totani.

Additionally, a number of the Centre’s web Resource Pages have been substantially redesigned and updated in recent weeks. See particularly: the Federalism and Indigenous Legal Issues Resources Pages and also a new Complementary Protection Resources Page within the International Refugee and Migration Law Project.

People

Three people have joined the Centre this semester:

- Dr Fergal Davis, previously a lecturer at Lancaster University, was appointed in the last academic recruitment round as a senior lecturer. He
is working with the Centre initially for three years on the ARC Laureate Fellowship: Anti-Terror Laws and the Democracy Challenge project;

- **Greg Weeks**, joined the Faculty late last year and is convening its Administrative Law course. Greg holds undergraduate degrees in Arts (History) from the University of Sydney and law from UNSW, and is currently studying for a doctorate at UNSW. Prior to joining the faculty, Greg practised as a solicitor in the litigation group of a large national firm and taught law at UTS and the University of Sydney.
- The Centre’s Social Justice Intern for this semester is Rob Woods. Rob has already had a good exposure to the various projects of the Centre and has assisted with research and writing of public submissions and the development of online resources.

We welcome any enquiries for better particulars concerning the Centre’s many activities or research. Please forward this e-bulletin or the links to information about our work over the last three months to anyone you know who may have an interest in these issues.

Associate Professor Andrew Lynch
Director

*To unsubscribe from the G+T Centre Mailing list, please email ‘Unsubscribe’ to gtcentre@unsw.edu.au*