

The logo for the Legal Intersections Research Centre is a blue banner with white text. The text reads "LEGAL INTERSECTIONS RESEARCH CENTRE" on the first line and "CONNECT: FACULTY OF LAW" on the second line. The banner has a 3D effect with darker blue sides.

LEGAL INTERSECTIONS  
RESEARCH CENTRE  
CONNECT: FACULTY OF LAW

**LIRC 2012 Panel Discussion**

You are invited to a Legal Intersections Research Centre Panel Discussion on:

**Wednesday 17 October 2012**

4.30 – 6.00 pm

Location: University of Wollongong

Building 67 Room 302

RSVP: 12/10/2012 [fmartin@uow.edu.au](mailto:fmartin@uow.edu.au)

*(wine and light refreshments provided)*

**Public Interest Litigation: Models for Social Justice**

***Advancing human rights through jurisprudential development – Strategic litigation at the HRLC***

**Anna Brown**, Director of Advocacy & Strategic Litigation at the Human Rights Law Centre  
The Human Rights Law Centre’s model of social change seeks to advance human rights through a tactical combination of evidence-based advocacy, strategic litigation, research and education. The Centre runs cases which seek to strengthen the constitutional recognition and protection of human rights and the rule of law and employs a particular model of strategic litigation. This paper will briefly canvas litigation in which the Centre has been involved in recent times, including the landmark cases *Roach v Commonwealth* and *Rowe v Australian Electoral Commission & Commonwealth*, as well as litigation involving the Victorian Charter of Rights and Responsibilities. Anna will discuss in detail more recent work agitating for the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and protest in the Occupy Melbourne case before the Federal Court, a case which is being “watched closely around the world” in light of its implications for peaceful protest and participatory democracy.

Anna’s legal and policy advocacy work at the HRLC focuses on police accountability; equality law reform; and the legal and institutional protection of human rights. Anna was previously an adviser to the former Victorian Attorney-General, the Hon Rob Hulls, with primary responsibility for human rights, equal opportunity, Indigenous issues and LGBTIQ rights. She has substantial experience in litigation having worked as a Senior Solicitor with the Victorian Government Solicitor’s Office, a Senior Associate with Allens Arthur Robinson and a Federal Court associate. Anna has provided legal advice and education on human rights law to a diverse range of clients including corporations, the public sector and international organisations.

***Thalidomide – litigating 50 years after the disaster***

**Michael Magazanik**, Slater and Gordon, Solicitors

Thalidomide is among history’s most notorious medical disasters. The drug attacked the developing embryo and caused thousands of miscarriages, deaths and severe injuries in dozens

of countries. Many of the survivors were never compensated, lacking the resources to press their claims against the drug companies responsible, or told their injuries did not fit the flawed notion of what was a “thalidomide injury”. In 2010, Lyn Rowe, a woman born without limbs in Melbourne in 1962, contacted Gordon Legal. Soon she was the lead Plaintiff in a class action against the German manufacturer and the English distributor of the drug. Three months ago (only 18 months after contacting lawyers) Lyn settled her claim for a multi-million dollar sum, enough to provide her with top level care for the rest of her life. Michael, who was one of two lawyers with conduct of Lyn’s claim, will speak about the challenges of litigating over an event which occurred 50 years ago, and the complexities of doing so in a class action setting.

Michael has worked as a journalist (The Age, The Australian, ABC TV), a political adviser and, since 2005, as a lawyer with Slater & Gordon. He recently spent 4 years in Perth where among other things he managed the asbestos litigation department. Since early in 2011, he has had joint conduct of the widely publicised class action for Australian and New Zealand survivors of thalidomide; people who were the victims of the most notorious drug disaster in history but have never been compensated. In July this year the claim of the lead Plaintiff, Lyn Rowe, was settled for a multi-million dollar sum, and work is continuing on the claims of other group members.

***Community Action – public interest v commercial and government interest***

**Michael Sergent**, Senior Lawyer, Legal Aid Wollongong

Michael has been the senior lawyer in civil law at Wollongong Legal Aid NSW since 1996. During that time he has led teams of lawyers in fighting public interest cases for the local community, including the landmark 1997 Land & Environment Court case over the re-opening of the Port Kembla Copper Smelter, working with the Wollongong community to secure insurance payments for the many hundreds of victims affected by the 1998 Wollongong storms and floods, and in 2001 saving the homes of up to 100 retirees and pensioners at Lakeline Estate, Kanahooka whose homes had been mortgaged by an unethical developer. In 1997 Michael won the NSW Excellence Award for Government Legal Service for his work on the Port Kembla Copper smelter case. His legal passion is targeting test cases which will have an impact on the wider community. One of his current test cases is soon to be heard in the NSW Supreme Court and, if successful, will ensure important rights of the mentally ill involuntarily detained in NSW hospitals are safeguarded.

Michael will talk about the cases he has been involved with and the challenges faced by individuals taking on the might of both large corporations and government, particularly when that government controls the information required to support a case and has the legislative power to block legal challenges.