INDIGENOUS LAW CENTRE

Faculty of Law
UNSW

2012 Annual Report
Introduction

The Indigenous Law Centre (ILC) was established in 1981 to develop and co-ordinate research, teaching and information services in the multi-disciplinary area of Indigenous peoples and the law. To date it remains the only Indigenous law centre in Australia. The ILC is funded by the Indigenous and Community Services Legal Branch of the Attorney-General’s Department and is based at the Faculty of Law.

The core objectives of the ILC are to:
- conduct legal research into Indigenous peoples and the law and to publish and disseminate ILC research throughout and Australia and internationally;
- participate in national and international law and policy discussion and debate about Indigenous peoples and the law; and
- develop curricula and teaching materials on domestic and international Indigenous legal issues and to encourage and foster student research in domestic and international Indigenous legal issues.

ILC Core Activities

Journals

To achieve these objectives the ILC publishes two highly regarded Indigenous legal publications, the Indigenous Law Bulletin (ILB) and the Australian Indigenous Law Review (AILR). The primary purpose of these journals is to provide access to current, relevant and useful information in order to facilitate the advancement of Indigenous legal rights. Both the AILR and the ILB are available through major online databases such as Informit and Heinonline.

Open Forum and Workshops

In addition to these key publications, the ILC hosts up to two open forums a year. The key objective of the forums is to engage the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community by providing an alternative to the written medium as a way of reaching a wider audience. The open forums create a space where Indigenous people can learn and discuss issues that directly relate to them. The filming and posting online of such events also allows such content to be more widely accessed.

In September, the Centre in collaboration with You Me Unity held an open forum at the Opera House titled ‘Does Constitutional Reform Negate Aboriginal Sovereignty?’

Panellists for this open forum included Professor Megan Davis (Director of the Indigenous Law Centre), Professor George Williams (Australian Research Council Laureate Fellow, School of Law, UNSW), Nicole Watson (Senior Researcher, Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, UTS) and Les Malezer (Co-Chair of National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples). The experience and knowledge of these panellists led to a successful and popular event eliciting informed and diverse debate.

Website

In addition to participating in social media, the ILC maintains an informative and topical website (http://www.ilc.unsw.edu.au). The purpose of the website is to showcase the work of the Centre and to create a space for a better understanding of Indigenous law related issues to the wider community.
The website has proven to be a valuable resource for researchers, students, policy makers and other people interested to learn more about Indigenous legal issues. Data from Google Analytics show the website attracts over 5,000 hits per month, with the Constitutional Reform resource page receiving the most hits over the 12 month period.

The second most popular page is the publications page. A feature article from each Issue of the ILB and AILR is placed on this page for free download. The feature article is chosen for its importance and ability to make a significant contribution to Indigenous legal affairs and to encourage a balanced discussion on the wider issues affecting Indigenous people.

In 2012, as an outcome of research conducted by Dr Kyllie Cripps and Professor Megan Davis into the experiences of Indigenous women and children as victims of sexual abuse in Australian courts, a new resource page ‘The Indigenous Sexual Assault Research and Resources Gateway’ was established.
Management and ILC Staff

Management and Governance Structure
The Centre Director, Megan Davis is a full-time Professor of Law and is provided 0.5 teaching relief to undertake her duties as Director. The two Centre Fellows, Dr Kyllie Cripps and Leon Terrill, are permanent staff members of UNSW Law. The Centre Fellows hold honorary appointments conferred by the Dean in consultation with the Director. They are not provided teaching relief. Their appointments are based on their research achievements and interests to augment the Centre’s research depth and reach. Both Centre Fellows report to the Director; the Director reports directly to the Dean of Law.

The Centre Coordinator and the two journal editors’ salaries are funded by the Attorney-General’s Department. The Centre applies annually for funding which is based on a financial year (July-June). The Coordinator and Editors are on annual contracts according to the funding arrangements.

Figure 1: Centre Structure

The Management Board provide support and guidance to the Director as and when required and assures the Centre operates in accordance with UNSW Policies and Guidelines. The Board additionally provides guidance in setting and reviewing the Centre’s strategic direction and help achieve the Centre’s objectives through regular meetings.

As part of the funding arrangement with the Attorney-General’s Department the Centre is required to submit 6 monthly progress and financial reports on the activities funded by the Department.

Management Board
The members of the ILC Management Board in 2012 were:

- Professor Kathy Bowrey (Chair)
- Professor Megan Davis (ILC Director)
- Professor Martin Nakata (Director Nura Gili, UNSW)
- Emeritus Professor Garth Nettheim (School of Law, UNSW)
- Professor Gary Edmond (School of Law, UNSW)
- Ms Deborah Healey (Senior Lecturer, School of Law, UNSW)
- Ms Brooke Predebon (General Manager, Faculty of Law, UNSW)
- Ms Mehera San Roque (Senior Lecture, School of Law, UNSW)

Three Management Board meetings were held during 2012 (1st March: 75% attendance, 18th July: electronic meeting due to member availability, 28th November: 65% attendance).
ILC Staff

- **Director** – Megan Davis
  Dr Megan Davis is a Professor of Law, and a Commissioner of the NSW Land and Environment Court. She is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Law. Megan is a UN expert member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) (state member) and holds portfolios including Administration of Justice and Gender and Women. In 2012 Megan was the Rapporteur of the UNPFII Expert Group Meeting on Violence Against Indigenous Women in New York and Rapporteur of the UNPFII.

- **Centre Fellow** – Dr Kyllie Cripps
  Dr Cripps research interests include issues relating to Indigenous family violence and child abuse including policy development and program delivery; Indigenous research processes and practices; Indigenous health and Indigenous education. Kyllie holds an appointment as Senior Lecturer in the School of Law.

- **Centre Fellow** – Leon Terrill
  Leon previously worked as a senior lawyer with the Central Land Council, coordinator of the University of the South Pacific Community Legal Centre and a solicitor with Victoria Legal Aid. He is currently undertaking a PhD on Aboriginal land reform in the Northern Territory. Leon is Lecturer with the School of Law.

- **Centre Co-ordinator** – Janette Murdoch
  The Coordinator is responsible for the day to day running of the Indigenous Law Centre.

- **Journal Editor** – Rob McCreery (ILB editor) and Rob Woods (AILR editor)
  The journal editors are responsible for the timely production of their respective journals.

- **2012 Student Involvement**
  In 2012, the ILC offered two types of internships – the Social Justice Intern Program and the ILC Student Editor Internship. The popularity and value of these internships was evident during 2012 with the ILC taking on a total of 15 students (listed below).

**Social Justice Intern Program**
- Semester 2: Courtney Adamson and Michael Brull

**ILC Student Editor Internship**
- ILB Semester 1: Alexandra Lillis, Hadeel Al-Alosi and Farzana Choudhury
- ILB Semester 2: James Zovaro, Nichole Soo and Jacqueline Fetchet
- AILR Semester 1: Emmanuel Brennan, Kate Cora and Simon Lindsay
- AILR Semester 2: Amanda Kazacos, Priscilla Varsanyi, Hanna Sewell and Giridhar Kowtal

- **Centre Associates**
  Centre Associates are academics, researchers or consultants whose work is directly related to the work of the ILC. They are appointed by the Director in consultation with the Management Board. The aim of the Centre Associate program is to foster collegial working relationships that may facilitate and support collaborative opportunities and strengthen the research capacity of the ILC.

- Dr Thalia Anthony (Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Law, UTS)
• Associate Professor Sean Brennan (School of Law, UNSW)
• Neva Collings (Solicitor, Environmental Defender’s Office NSW)
• Rachel Davis (Legal Advisor to the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Business and Human Rights)
• Brenda Gunn (School of Law, University of Manitoba)
• Dylan Lino (PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne)
• Greg Marks (Canberra based consultant specialising in international human rights law)
• Emeritus Professor Garth Netthein (School of Law, UNSW)
• Professor Caroline Taylor (Foundation Chair of Social Justice, Edith Cowan University)
• Louise Taylor (Canberra based lawyer)

Centre Operations

The ILC is funded by the Indigenous and Community Services Legal Branch of the Attorney-General’s Department. The Faculty of Law, UNSW provides generous in-kind support to the Centre, including office space, office furniture and equipment including communication and technological resources.
Research projects

Aboriginal land and tenure reform
Project Director: Leon Terrill

Since around 2005, several Australian governments have been actively engaged in the making of reforms to Aboriginal land ownership. The main focus of reform has been the Northern Territory, but they are also being implemented to varying degrees in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and New South Wales.

The reforms arose out of debate about communal and individual land ownership and enabling economic development and home ownership on Aboriginal land. During their implementation, the focus has instead been on enabling leases to government departments and NGOs in a manner that complies with the Australian Government’s new ‘secure tenure’ funding rules.

The aim of this project is to improve understandings of land reform, both as they are currently being implemented and more generally. The project draws on international research on land reform, and considers the relationship between tenure and economic development, governance and service delivery.

Alcohol regulation in the Northern Territory
Project Directors: Leon Terrill and Associate Professor Sean Brennan

The Northern Territory has the highest rate of alcohol consumption per capita of any state or territory in Australia. Consequently, residents – including many Aboriginal residents – experience very high rates of alcohol-related harm.

The Northern Territory Government has introduced a large number of laws to deal with this issue. For the most part, those laws target consumers and criminalise behaviour such as drinking in public spaces or declared dry areas. To a lesser extent, those laws also target suppliers with the aim of reducing the availability of alcohol or certain types of product.

In addition to this, since 2007 the Australian Government has introduced its own set of laws to deal with alcohol-related harm in Aboriginal communities – initially as part of the ‘Northern Territory Emergency Response’ (or ‘Intervention’) and more recently as part of the ‘Stronger Futures’ package. The focus of those laws has been on the criminalisation of consumption in identified areas, particularly on Aboriginal land.

There exists a large body of research that considers the effectiveness of particular measures for the reduction of alcohol-related harm. One of the aims of this project is to produce a clearer framework for understanding the relationship between that research and existing and proposed laws. In addition to this, the project aims to clarify some of the legal issues that have the potential to interact with alcohol reform, such as discrimination, competition and taxation law.
Constitutional Reform and Indigenous Peoples  
Project Director: Professor Megan Davis  
Research Associate: Dylan Lino  

In 2007, both sides of politics agreed that when it comes to addressing Indigenous disadvantage, the practical and the symbolic are two sides of the same coin. This project has two themes: constitutional reform and second, reconciliation.

The first phase of this project will involve a critical examination of all the suggested ideas and frameworks for constitutional reform in Australia and will also involve research into extra-parliamentary representation for Indigenous peoples including an analysis of the challenges that have arisen from comparative examples particularly for Indigenous women. The second phase of this project will involve an examination of the Reconciliation process in Australia, drawing upon comparative processes for reconciliation and creating a framework for addressing unfinished business in Australia building upon the work of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and Reconciliation Australia.

High Schools Resource Web Page  
Project Co-ordinator: Janette Murdoch  

In 2012 the Centre began developing an online resource titled “Our Stories, Law and More” for high school students covering Australian Indigenous history in relation to law and policy. To appeal to the target group, the website incorporates elements of multimedia and social networking and will encourage students to submit their own academic and creative works for display on the site. Law interns assisted with the development of website design and content. The website covers important Indigenous issues such as: the constitution, land rights and native title, law and policy, the stolen generation, self determination and reconciliation.

Indigenous Peoples and International Law  
Project Director: Professor Megan Davis  

Over the past four decades Indigenous Peoples have forged an important presence in the international system in particular in international human rights advocacy and most recently in the international trade system. Indigenous involvement at the United Nations has been successful in raising awareness of Indigenous peoples rights. Indigenous peoples advocacy at the United Nations has led to the establishment of a number of mechanisms dealing specifically with Indigenous peoples issues and this includes the permanent body known as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, based in New York.

Indigenous advocacy at the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations also led to the drafting of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which was passed by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2006 and adopted by the General Assembly in 2007. The Working Group on Indigenous Populations has been the core body that has driven many of the initiatives and developments in international law benefitting Indigenous peoples. It was situated at the lowest position on the United Nations hierarchy but its standard setting and review of developments mandate were crucial to increasing the world community’s understanding of inherent rights and also the knowledge of historical and contemporary violations of Indigenous rights.

This project aims to examine the scope of Indigenous peoples rights in international law. In particular this project will analyse the jurisprudence of the United Nations treaty bodies
on Indigenous rights. It will also examine and monitor the influence of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Australia. More broadly it will examine the usefulness of international advocacy and international law to Indigenous peoples in Australia.

**Indigenous Sexual Assault Research and Resources Gateway**
Project Directors: Professor Megan Davis and Dr Kyllie Cripps

In 2012 the Centre continued its ongoing research into Aboriginal women and children’s experiences of sexual assault before the courts. After being approached by many professionals and organisations seeking resources to better inform practice and engagement within Indigenous communities, the Indigenous Sexual Assault Research and Resources Gateway was developed.

The aim of the Gateway was to facilitate access to the growing evidence-base on sexual assault and to support individuals, organisations, and agencies to use research, evidence and resources specifically focussed on Indigenous experiences of sexual assault to shape present and future policy, practice and research directions in responding to, and reducing sexual assault in Indigenous communities.

Further to this, in 2012 Professor Megan Davis, Dr Kyllie Cripps and Associate Professor Annie Cossins based on the early research findings of the sexual assault project, refined the methodology and applied for an Australian Research Council Indigenous Discovery Grant which we were successful in obtaining. The current project now funded 2013-2015, examines whether extra-legal factors about sexuality and Indigenous culture influence the sentencing of Indigenous sex offenders in the NT. It will provide an empirical basis for future policy, legal practice and law reform relating to sentencing in sexual assault cases in the NT with broader application to other Australian jurisdictions.

**UNDRIP: Online Public Database**
Project Director: Professor Megan Davis

In 2012 the Centre embarked on a new project to monitor the extent to which the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ('UNDRIP') is being implemented and used (practised) around the world. The aim of the project is to provide insight into the UNDRIP's standing as a source of customary international law. The centrepiece of the project will be a publicly available database documenting cases that reference the UNDRIP. The database will enable states, Indigenous peoples and other organisations to develop a more concrete idea of the UNDRIP's utility and the impact it is having on the rights of Indigenous peoples.

In 2012, Megan Davis travelled to Geneva as a representative of the UNPFII to enlist support from several leading international academic institutions to become key stakeholders in the project.

The database currently focuses on case law, but will expand in 2013 onwards to include measures of constitutional, statutory and policy implementation. The database will be hosted on the AustLII website (www.austlii.edu.au). It will be regularly updated and freely available to the public and will encourage submissions regarding implementation of the UNDRIP.
Publications

ILC publications

- The Indigenous Law Bulletin (ILB)
  The ILB is a leading journal for accessible, accurate and timely information about Australia’s Indigenous peoples and the law. The ILB is a valuable resource to legal practitioners, advocate, policy-makers and researchers. This journal is published six times a year. In 2012, the following Volumes/Issues were published:
  - Indigenous Law Bulletin 2012, Volume 7 Issue 28
  - Indigenous Law Bulletin 2012, Volume 7 Issue 29
  - Indigenous Law Bulletin 2012, Volume 7 Issue 30
  - Indigenous Law Bulletin 2012, Volume 8 Issue 1
  - Indigenous Law Bulletin 2012, Volume 8 Issue 2
  - Indigenous Law Bulletin 2012, Volume 8 Issue 3

- The Australian Indigenous Law Review (AILR)
  The AILR is unique in Australian legal publishing and is the only peer-reviewed journal focused solely on Indigenous law in the country. It brings current issues in Australian Indigenous law and policy together with developments affecting Indigenous peoples around the world. The AILR makes a significant contribution to the work of the government in augmenting the development of law and policy and supplementing programs and services for Indigenous Australians. In 2012, one Volume was published (Australian Indigenous Law Review 2012, Volume 16 Number 1), with the second underway at the end of 2012.

- ILC eNewsletter
  The ILC regularly produces a concise and easy to read eNewsletter to provide subscribers and those interested in the work of the Centre on the Centre’s activities in the preceding months. In 2012, two eNewsletters (Number 5 and 6) were produced.

- Native Title Timeline
  In 2012, a timeline listing the most significant developments in Native Title between the years of 1788 and 2012 was produced and distributed with the ILB. The timeline is additionally available for download from the ILC website.

Staff Publications

- Book Chapters
• **Peer Reviewed Journal Articles**


• **Other publications and submissions**


Terrill, L. (2012). Submission number 269 to Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, Inquiry into the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011 and two related bills, 1 February.
Collaborations, Consultancies and Scholarly Achievements

Collaborations
The UNSW Faculty of Law has been a long term advocate of the Centre, with the Centre similarly developing strong and collegial working relationships with many UNSW Law staff.

In 2012 Professor Prue Vines, under the auspice of the Indigenous Law Centre, saw the realisation of her research culminate in the publication of ‘Aboriginal Wills Handbook’ (release date early 2013). The book is intended to assist Aboriginal people in New South Wales who wish to make a Will which is culturally appropriate for them.

The ‘Handbook’ recognises that in many cases the law of intestacy is not culturally appropriate for Aboriginal people and that those who draft Wills for Aboriginal people are often not sure how to make a culturally appropriate Will. The advantage of a Will for Aboriginal people is that it is more likely to reflect their wishes and their cultural position than intestacy laws which apply if no Will is made.

The Centre is also involved in on-going collaborative work with Sean Brennan in relation to a project on ‘Alcohol regulation in the Northern Territory’. Associate Professor Brennan is the director of the Indigenous Legal Issues Project at the Gilbert + Tobin Centre of Public Law. As part of this project, a student from the Law School, Errin Walker, published an article in the Indigenous Law Bulletin called ‘Stronger Futures Alcohol Regulation in the NT’.

A further example of the value of the ILC’s knowledge and understanding of Indigenous issues to outside agencies is demonstrated by the frequent reference made to Dr Cripps’ submission in a report “Family Violence and Commonwealth Laws – Improving Legal Frameworks” by the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC). Dr Cripps and an ILC student intern prepared a submission to the ALRC in 2011 focused on the challenges that the existing law presented for Indigenous community members, with the final report by the ALRC released in 2012. The report is available to download from http://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/family-violence-and-commonwealth-laws-improving-legal-frameworks-alrc-report-117.

Other scholarly achievements

- Professor Davis was appointed in 2012 as a Fellow to the Australian Academy of Law in 2012
- Professor Davis presented the Wentworth Lecture at AIATSIS Canberra, 2012
- Professor Davis gave the 2012 Herbert and Valmae Freilich Foundation Annual Lecture on Bigotry and Intolerance
- Professor Davis gave the prestigious Naarm Oration at the University of Melbourne, 2012. She spoke on Aboriginal women and the limitations of the right to self determination.
- Professor Davis was elected as the Rapporteur of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to write the report of the UNPFII in May 2012.
- Professor Davis was elected as the Rapporteur of the Expert Group Meeting on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls to write the report of the EGM in January 2012.
- Professor Davis, Dr Kyllie Cripps and Assoc Prof Cossins were successfully in an ARC grant looking at the role of cultural factors in the sentencing of Indigenous sex offenders in the Northern Territory.
• Dr Kyllie Cripps participated in a one day workshop as a panellist with Leanne Miller from Koorie Women Mean Business, Mark Harris from School of Law, LaTrobe University, Elena Marchetti from School of Law, University of Wollongong, and Jody Saxton-Barney from Deaf Indigenous Community Consultancy on the topic of “Restorative justice and Indigenous family violence”, workshop with community and service providers in Melbourne, May 2012.

• Dr Kyllie Cripps participated as a panellist in a one day workshop focussed on “Sexual assault in Indigenous communities”, workshop with community and service providers, Melbourne, April 2012. The other panellists including Daphne Yarram from Yoowinna Wurnalung Healing Service, Angela Weller from Australian Childhood Foundation and Caroline Worth from South East Centre Against Sexual Assault.

• Dr Kyllie Cripps participated in a one workshop as a panellist on the topic of “‘Failure to Protect’ in Indigenous Communities” with the Victorian Child Safety Commission Bernie Geary, Professor Cathy Humphries from the University of Melbourne, Leigh Gassner from Reos Partners, and Karen Flanagan from Save the Children. The workshop took place in Melbourne, March 2012 and was attended by service providers and Indigenous and non Indigenous community members.

• Leon Terrill presented a paper called ‘Tenure Security: Concept and Implementation’ to staff from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.

• Leon Terrill presented a paper called ‘Alternative approaches to developing a land reform model’ as part of the Centre for Aboriginal and Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) seminar series, at the Australian National University, Canberra.
Teaching and Research Supervision

Teaching at UNSW
In 2012, the Centre Director and Centre Fellows taught in a number of subjects within the Faculty of Law, UNSW. Courses and the respective ILC staff members are listed below.

- Indigenous Women and the Law (LAWS8124; a new postgraduate subject), Semester 2 – Prof Davis and Dr Cripps
- Indigenous Peoples in International Law (LAWS8413), Semester 1 – Prof Davis (taught and convened)
- International Human Rights Law (LAWS8181), Semester 2 – Prof Davis (taught)
- Public Law (LAWS1140), Semester 2 - Prof Davis (taught)
- Foundations of Law Semester 1 & 2 (LAWS1052 and JURD7052– Dr Cripps
- Property, Equity and Trusts 1, Semester Two (JURD 7281) – Terrill (convened)
- Property and Equity 2, Semester Two (JURD 7282) – Terrill (taught)

Research Supervision of PhD students
In 2012 a number of PhD students were supervised by staff of the ILC. Students and their topics include:

- Dr Ngiare Brown – Addressing the disparities in Aboriginal child well-being: A human rights based, public health approach to Aboriginal child protection (Supervisor: Prof Davis & Dr Cripps)
- Leon Terrill – Aboriginal land reform in the Northern Territory (Supervisor: Assoc Prof Brennan & Prof Davis)
- Jackie Hartley - Consultation, Consent and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to their Lands, Territories and Resources (Supervisor: Prof Davis & Assoc Prof Brennan)
- Dylan Lino - ‘The Politics of Inclusion: The Right of Self-Determination, Statutory Bills of Rights and Indigenous Peoples’ - (External student, Supervisor: Prof Davis)
- Darryl Cronin – Dialogue as a process for negotiating Indigenous rights in Australia (Prof Patton & Dr Cripps)

Dr Cripps also supervised a student undertaking a DrPh with the Ministry of Health and the UNSW in 2012.

- Dr Marlene Kong – Aboriginal health (Assoc Prof Haswell-Elkins & Dr Cripps)