



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2023



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**NEWCASTLE**  
AUSTRALIA

**CENTRE FOR LAW  
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

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<https://www.newcastle.edu.au/research/centre/law-and-social-justice>





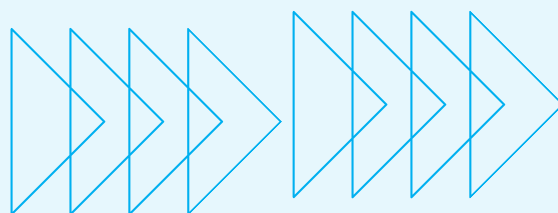
## A WORD FROM OUR CO-DIRECTORS...



The Centre for Law and Social Justice was launched in mid-2022 with generous support from the University of Newcastle. Our early efforts were focused on relationship- and reputation-building, and we set a cracking pace with 20 events over our first year of operation.



In 2023, we have diversified our activities across our key areas of focus and attracted contributions from so many fantastic partners. Our network includes the outstanding staff and students of the School of Law and Justice at the University of Newcastle, and reaches across other disciplines in our University community. We have active engagements with stakeholders across multiple fields related to law and social justice, across Australia and increasingly abroad. We are proud to share this first formal Annual Report and reflect on the research, engagement, clinical and teaching activities that make our Centre and School distinctive and impactful.





## OUR NETWORK

### PARTNER ORGANISATIONS



Human  
Rights  
Law  
Centre.



AUSTRALIAN  
LAWYERS  
FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS



centre of **excellence**  
for **equity** in higher  
education



## OUR NETWORK

### CENTRE ASSOCIATES



**Jack Anderson**



**Natalie Baird**



**Zar Chavla**



**Hayley Cullen**



**Kishaya Delaney**



**Lauren Davies**



**Luke Hawthorne**



**Bronwyn Hemsley**



**Mary Anne Kenny**



**Fiona McGaughey**



**Jeffrey McGee**



**Maria O'Sullivan**



**Emma Parker**



**Charlotte Pascall**



**Sangeetha Pillai**



**Caitlin Reiger**



**Susan Harris Rimmer**



**Chris Turner**



## OUR NETWORK

### UNIVERSITY FELLOWS



**Tamara Blakemore**



**Professor Avi Brisman**



**Loren Collyer**



**Damien Linnane**



**Caitlin Mollica**



**Faye Nitchke**

### POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWS

**March 2022 - December 2022**



**Samuel Blanch**



**Ana Goncalves**



**Aloka Wanigasuriya**



## OVERVIEW

The Centre for Law and Social Justice is based in the Newcastle School of Law and Justice and is a site for research, engagement, learning, and advocacy. Here, expert researchers and clinical staff partner with students, communities, and key organisations. In its first two years of operation, the Centre has built a national and global profile as a driving force in social justice research, policymaking, law reform, and community engagement. The Centre has established an impressive network of partner organisations, fellows, and associates, and is committed to investing in clinical initiatives, research training, and student internships to support a sustainable future. The six core values of the Centre for Law and Social Justice are:



### Vision

The vision of the Centre for Law and Social Justice is to position the University as a leader in social justice transformation through research, teaching and practice.

### Mission

The Centre for Law and Social Justice aims to foster a deep commitment to social and ethical practices, to develop solutions to pressing and complex social justice problems, and to encourage and support multidisciplinary collaboration and innovation.

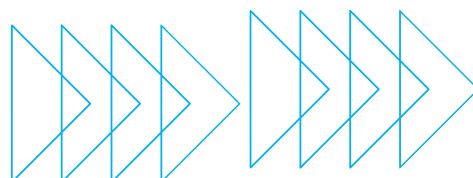


## OVERVIEW

In alignment with the Centre's commitment to build a better justice system and apply legal solutions, the Centre has made impressive contributions advocating for law reform. In the first two years of operation, the Centre has made seven submissions to parliamentary inquiries including submissions to The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Report on Conscientious Objection to Military Service, The Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework, and the Review of New Zealand's Emissions Trading Scheme. These submissions and advocacy efforts have contributed to knowledge production and have played a key role in leveraging the profile of the Centre.

As a result of this advocacy work, in March 2023, the Centre was invited to appear at a public hearing on the Inquiry into the application of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in Australia. The Centre participated in a round table with two other selected academic institutions at Parliament House in Canberra, to identify options for improving adherence to UNDRIP principles in Australia and to discuss how the implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart could support UNDRIP's application. Additional advocacy engagement opportunities have included participation, by invitation, in the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Roundtable on Refugee Education Migration Pathways in June 2023.

The Centre is committed to providing legal assistance to people and institutions with particular needs. For example, the Centre is expanding opportunities for School of Law and Justice students to contribute to legal research and policy design projects in the Pacific that resource government agencies and intergovernmental organisations in addressing pressing issues like climate change. The Centre also collaborates with the University of Newcastle Legal Centre and the University of Newcastle Justice Centre to expand the clinical legal education and intensive placement opportunities for law and criminology students and ensure that their work has positive community impacts.







## OVERVIEW

In alignment with the Centre's commitment to promote inclusion and support a strong community, the Centre for Law and Social Justice hosts an annual Youth Forum, bringing together students from diverse backgrounds from the Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, and Hunter region. Our 2023 Youth Forum on the Right to a Healthy Environment, in collaboration with the Human Rights for NSW Alliance brought together 55+ high school students from 12 schools to discuss the right to a healthy environment in the context of human rights. The Forum was co-convened with Annika Reynolds, Climate Policy Advisor at Ember and Isabel Moss, Disability Justice Liaison Officer at Canberra Community Law. Students engaged in a collaborative writing session to draft the 'School Students' Statement on the Right to a Healthy Environment.' The Youth Forum was attended by Sharon Claydon, Federal MP for Newcastle and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives.

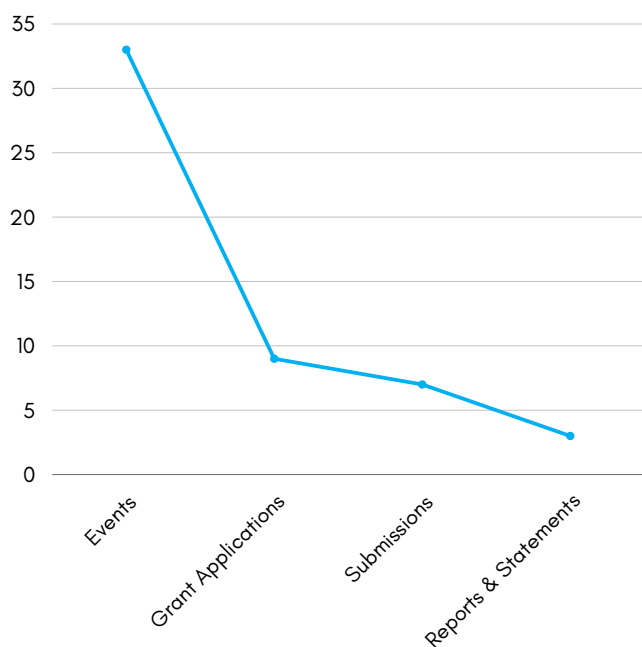
Our commitment to addressing injustice and tackling wicked problems is evidenced through the range of events hosted by the Centre. The Centre has successfully hosted 33 events in the first two years of operation addressing a range of topics including: human rights and climate change, compensation owed to victims of alleged Australian war crimes, reform proposals for healthcare in prison, the Russia-Ukraine war, disability rights and the NDIS, and forced migration. These engagements support knowledge dissemination and facilitate robust and insightful discussion. These events have attracted 1,600+ attendees demonstrating impressive outreach.

The Centre aims to work on real-world projects with real-world benefits, taking a collaborative approach, with opportunities to establish partnerships with students including undergraduate and PhD students within and beyond the legal discipline. The Centre supports social justice student projects through directed course offerings. These are LAWS6043 Advanced Legal Research Project and LAWS6091 Special Interest Topic. A list of social justice student projects is available on our website. Our research facilitates the development of a stronger nexus between industry engagement and research practice. In 2023, the Centre collaborated with the Human Rights Law Centre to develop a comprehensive report on the Right to Education in Australia. This is part of the Centre's broader collaboration on the federal Charter of Rights Campaign.

# SNAPSHOT OVERVIEW

In the first two years of operation The Centre for Law and Social Justice has...

- Ø Hosted **33 events** and attracted **1,600 attendees** across all events and **350+ views** on recorded events. These events include public lectures, panel discussions, online webinars, Q&A sessions, film screenings, roundtables, art exhibitions, workshops, youth forums, report launches, and symposiums.
- Ø Made **7 submissions** to parliamentary inquiries including submissions to; The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Report on Conscientious Objection to Military Service; The Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs; Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework; and the Review of New Zealand's Emissions Trading Scheme
- Ø Supported **9 grant applications** including applications to the Australian Research Council, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Federal Governments Research Support Program (RSP), and internal grant schemes at the University of Newcastle.
- Ø Published **1 major report** titled, 'The Right to Education in Australia' in collaboration with The Human Rights Law Centre and **2 statements** on the Right to Education and the Right to a Healthy Environment.
- Ø Attracted **2,667 unique users to our website** and **8,693 page views** across **15 countries**.
- Ø Disseminated **6 newsletters** to our mailing list of **300+ supporters**.



## ***International Human Rights Law - Lessons in the Era of Covid-19***

*Fantastic Webinar. Accessible, engaging, contemporary and thought-provoking content delivered. Huge thank you to the panelists and to everyone who made it happen."*

BETHANY BUTCHERS

CENTRE FOR LAW  
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

## ADVOCACY AND LAW REFORM

A core function of the Centre for Law and Social Justice is to contribute to advocacy and law reform initiatives. In the first two years of operation the Centre has submitted seven submissions to parliamentary inquiries and signed two open letters on the right to vote and discrimination against migrants with disabilities. Our advocacy extends to clinical expertise with our Legal Centre offering pro bono services in the pursuit of public good. A detailed list of our advocacy and law reform efforts can be found below.

### **Submission on the Review of New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme**

Dr Elena Aydos and Dr Sven Rudolph, Scientific Advisor on Climate and Energy Policy at Institut fuer Kirche und Gesellschaft (IKG), have collaboratively authored a [submission](#) in response to the public consultation on the Review of the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme (NZ ETS). The submission emphasizes the importance of driving greenhouse gas emissions reductions through the NZ ETS and makes a series of recommendations for a significant review of the NZ ETS.

### **Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework**

The Centre for Law and Social Justice co-authored a [submission](#) to the Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework. The submission demonstrates a need for a comprehensive human rights framework, including a national Human Rights Act, to guide decision making, prevent breaches of human rights, and give people power to take action when their rights have been breached.

### **Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework – Right to Education**

The Centre for Law and Social Justice's Right to Education Research Team, coordinated a [submission](#) to the Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework. The submission argues that; a federal Human Rights Act should be enacted adopting the dialogue model, that the federal Human Rights Act should incorporate not only civil and political rights but also economic, social, and cultural rights (including the right to education) and that it should establish a mechanism for resolving human rights complaints, including access to courts and effective remedies where appropriate to achieve justice.

### **Minister's Roundtable on refugee Education Migration Pathways**

On Monday 5 June 2023, co-Director [Amy Maguire](#) represented the Centre for Law and Social Justice, at the Minister's Roundtable on Transforming Lives through a Refugee Education Migration Pathway, in Melbourne. The roundtable was convened by Andrew Giles, Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, and the Humanitarian Reform team from the Department of Home Affairs.

# ADVOCACY AND LAW REFORM

## **Open Letter Discrimination Against Migrants with Disabilities**

On March 2023, the Centre for Law and Social Justice joined [Welcoming Disability](#), [Down Syndrome Australia](#) and the [Australian Lawyers for Human Rights](#) (ALHR), calling for urgent reform of Australia's migration health laws to remove their discriminatory impact on people with disabilities and health conditions. The open letter can be accessed [here](#).

## **Joint Statement of Concern Regarding Suspension of UN Subcommittee on Torture Visit to Australia**

The Centre for Law and Social Justice has joined the [Australian Lawyers for Human Rights](#), and 70 leading organisations and individuals, by signing the statement condemning the NSW & QLD governments clear breaches of OPCAT obligations, which has forced suspension of the UN Subcommittee on Torture's visit to Australia. The statement can be accessed [here](#).

## **Inquiry into the Application of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Australia**

On 10 March 2023, The Centre for Law and Social Justice attended a public hearing of the [Inquiry into the Application of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Australia](#).

## **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Australia**

[Amy Maguire](#), with assistance from PhD candidate [Bethany Butchers](#), coordinated a co-authored [submission](#) to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, which was [inquiring](#) into the potential incorporation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

## **Open Letter to Vote**

The Centre for Law and Social Justice has joined the [Australian Lawyers for Human Rights](#) and 65 legal, disability and civil society organisations calling for action to protect the right of people with disability to vote in line with Australia's international human rights law obligations and recommendations for reform made by the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) in 2014. The letter can be accessed [here](#).

## **OHCHR Report on Conscientious Objection to Military Service (50th Session of the HRC)**

On 29 March 2022, [Amy Maguire](#) was invited to attend a virtual event to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), which is part of the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) special procedures framework. This opportunity arose after [submitting](#) to the OHCHR inquiry on conscientious objection.





## **GRANT APPLICATIONS**

### **Global Experience Support Fund, University of Newcastle**

In 2023, Associate Professor Kevin Sobel-Read in collaboration with the Centre for Law and Social Justice successfully received \$42,000 to support governments of small Pacific Island nations (Cook Islands and Samoa) in policy development. This project solidifies the position of the University of Newcastle as the leading university supporting and impacting the Pacific Islands.

### **Amy Maguire - Application for ARC Mid-Career Industry Fellowship (outcome expected March 2024)**

How can Australia Deliver its Commitments to Human Rights Reform?

This project seeks to address core challenges for human rights reform identified by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). It aims to deliver new knowledge about law reform in Australian and international systems and a first ever study of human rights indices, forming the evidence base for Australian policy and law making.

### **External Collaboration International (February 2023)**

In 2023, Associate Professor Amy Maguire successfully received \$10,000 via the External Collaboration Grant Scheme, to compare the human rights infrastructure of Australia and New Zealand to produce law reform recommendations. Part of the external collaboration includes delivering a seminar at the University of Canterbury on developments in Australian human rights law.

### **Pilot Scheme: The Human Right to Education in the Australian Context, University of Newcastle (February 2023)**

In 2023, The Centre for Law and Social Justice successfully received \$5,000 via the internal Pilot Scheme at the University of Newcastle. In 2022, the Centre commenced collaboration with the Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC), Australia's peak human rights law firm. This research project will extend collaboration with the HRLC, to research that creates an evidence base to enable better understanding of the human right to education in the Australian context.

### **Research Support Program (RSP) Funding Allocation (2021)**

In 2021, the Centre for Law and Social Justice was awarded \$250,000 by the University of Newcastle through its Research Stimulus Program block funding. Amy Maguire administered this grant to support the successful establishment of the Centre over 2021 and 2022. The funding was used to employ three post-doctoral research fellows, whose efforts enriched the Centre's research and engagement agendas. Several students of the School of Law and Justice were also employed as research assistants and research interns. The Centre successfully hosted 20 events in its first year of operation courtesy of this funding support.



## **RESEARCH PROJECTS**

The Centre aims to work on real-world projects with real-world benefits, taking a collaborative approach, with opportunities to establish partnerships with students including undergraduate and PhD students within and beyond the legal discipline. The Centre is committed to facilitating the development of a stronger nexus between industry engagement and research practice.

### **Pacific Engagement and Policy Development**

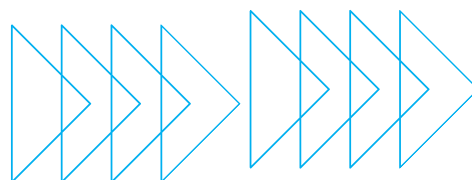
The Centre for Law and Social Justice is in conversation with the Attorney General's office to deepen engagement in the Pacific to build a region that is strategically secure, economically stable, and politically sovereign. The Centre is in the process of establishing collaboration base off the symbiosis between the Department's Legal Policy Development Courses and the Centre's Pacific Engagement Program. Through student-powered engagement, the Centre supports the Cook Islands in its development of law and legal policy: through legislative drafting, policy advice and the proliferation of on-the-ground legal materials, our Pacific Engagement program has improved Cook Islanders' safety, facilitated access to human rights protections and positioned the country to better protect itself under international law in the face of climate change.

### **The Right to Education**

The Centre for Law and Social Justice has partnered with the Human Rights Law Centre to produce a comprehensive report on the Right to Education. The report provides an overview of the right, how the right became enshrined in international human rights law, Australia's obligations, and the consequences of no enforceable right to education. The Report will officially be launched in early 2024 and can be accessed [here](#).

### **Student Social Justice Projects**

This report was prepared by Work Integrated Learning (WIL) students Madeline Howle, Lucy Burt, and Alex Graham in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The final report titled 'Loss and Damage: Identifying the funding gap,' aims to highlight the gaps in international policy in addressing the loss and damage of lived experiences of Pacific Island Nations and communities in the face of climate change. The report focuses on gaps in translating concepts of non-economic loss into concrete recommendations. It also provides an outline of the UNFCCC Funding Mechanism to demonstrate where loss and damage are not adequately addressed.





## **EVENTS**

The Centre for Law and Social Justice is committed to knowledge dissemination and facilitation of robust and insightful discussion. In its first two years of operation The Centre has successfully hosted 33 events addressing a range of topics. These events attracted 1,600+ live attendees and 350+ views on recorded events. For a comprehensive list of our 2022 events refer to '[A Year in Review 2022](#)' Report.

### **2023**

#### **Empowering Communities in a Context of Regulatory Capitalism and Capture**

On 28 March 2023, The Centre supported a seminar exploring the practical concepts and application of a multidisciplinary regulatory capture test synthesised by Dr Tony Brown. The recording is available [here](#).

#### **Wrongful Conviction & the Structural Analysis of Innocence Cases**

On March 27 2023, The Centre supported a seminar delivered by Dr. Makoto Ibusuki, Professor of Criminal Procedure Law at Seijo University, Tokyo. The seminar provided a comparative analysis of wrongful convictions and the structural analysis of innocence cases, using Japanese case examples. The recording is available [here](#).

#### **Compensation Owed to Victims of Alleged Australian War Crimes**

On 28 April 2023, The Centre hosted an online webinar exploring the reality of the legal, practical, and logistical issues in constructing state compensation schemes for war crimes. The webinar explored; legal problem solving, victim advocacy, and the tension between international and domestic law. The recording is available [here](#).

#### **The Human Rights of Young People**

On 4 May 2023, the Centre in collaboration with the [Human Rights Law Centre](#) hosted an online webinar exploring the challenges that young people face realising their human rights. Australia is an outlier as a liberal democracy without a national charter of human rights, this event endorses the campaign for an [Australian Charter of Human Rights](#). The recording is available [here](#).

#### **The Uluru Statement from the Heart Information Session**

On 15 May 2023, The Centre hosted an information session on the Uluru Statement from the Heart. This session explored the background and context to Constitutional recognition, the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and the Voice to Parliament. The session was led by Kishaya Delaney, a proud Wiradjuri woman who graduated from Newcastle Law School in 2020. The recording is available [here](#).

## EVENTS

### **Film Screening Scattered People**

On 30 May 2023, The Centre welcomed a diverse audience to a Film Screening – Scattered People. Scattered People offers a vehicle through which audiences can consider the experiences of people seeking asylum and refugees: the environments they have fled; their immigration journeys; the trauma they have experienced and the ongoing uncertainty of their visa status. Following the film, Dr Alice Neikirk hosted a panel discussion featuring Jack Chambers, Darkinyung man passionate about spreading the teachings of culture and connection, Ndi Ruppert, Principal Solicitor & Founder of the law practice Ruppert Legal and Louis Ndagijimana, Project Officer with the Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education (CEEHE).

### **Algorithmic Justice Symposium**

On Friday 14 July 2023, the Centre hosted its Algorithmic Justice Symposium at the University of Newcastle Sydney Campus. The Symposium reflected on the advances and challenges of algorithmic intervention in the broader context of justice innovation. The Symposium considered how these changes and challenges continue to be addressed in the justice system and how developments in the field of algorithmic justice innovation might be advanced in the next 5 – 10 years.

### **Sir Ninian Lecture – Environmental Justice**

On 4 August 2023, his Honour Justice Preston the Chief Judge of the Land and Environment Court of New South Wales, delivered a lecture reflecting on Environmental Justice.

### **Ian Fry – Human Rights & Climate Change**

On Tuesday 8 August 2023, the Centre hosted an online webinar with Dr Ian Fry, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change. Dr Ian Fry was appointed as Special Rapporteur by the UN Human Rights Council in May 2022. The recording is available [here](#).

### **Indigenous Business Handbook Launch**

The Indigenous Business Handbook was officially launched on 18 August 2023. The Indigenous Business Handbook is a resource that celebrates Indigenous culture and operates as a helpful legal tool. 20 students contributed to The Handbook over the years through Special Interest Topic Course (LAWS6091). The Handbook can be accessed [here](#).

### **HDR Roundtable**

On Tuesday 26 September, Newcastle School of Law and Justice convened a HDR roundtable. The roundtable was part of the HDR Student Festival organised by Graduate Research which consisted of a week of events and celebrations. The roundtable brought together twelve HDR candidates to present their research with peers from Criminology and Law disciplines.

### **Let's Talk Reform**

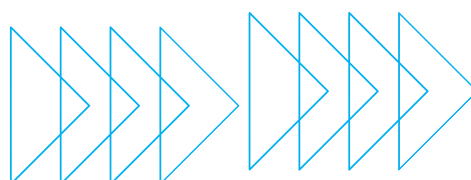
On Monday 16 October, The Centre collaborated with local organisation We Gotchu Girl, to deliver a panel discussion on law reform for sexual violence victims. The panel discussed potential initiatives for accessing justice, independent legal representation, specialist courts, and gaps that perpetrators use to evade consequence.





### **Youth Forum: Right to a Healthy Environment**

On Tuesday 8 November 2023, the Centre for Law and Social Justice in collaboration with Australian Lawyers for Human Rights and the Human Rights for New South Wales Alliance, hosted a Youth Forum on the Right to a Healthy Environment. The event brought together 55 high school students from 12 schools across the Hunter region of NSW to discuss the right to a healthy environment in the context of human rights. Students collaboratively drafted the 'School Students Statement on the Right to a Healthy Environment.' The Forum was co-convened with Annika Reynolds, Climate Policy Advisor at Ember and Isabel Moss, Disability Justice Liaison Officer at Canberra Community Law. For more information including a full gallery click [here](#).



# FEEDBACK SUMMARY

## **Compensation Owed to Victims of Alleged Australian War Crimes**

*"Helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities in bringing justice to victims of war crimes. Great to see there are people dedicated to achieving this on behalf of those that cannot."*

## **Ian Fry, Human Rights and Climate Change**

*"Such an informative webinar – Dr Fry is an impressive advocate who shows amazing commitment to the human rights issues raised by climate change. Great to hear his praise for UON's community engagement."*

## **Methodology Workshop: Socio-Legal Skills for Addressing Social Justice Questions**

*"Such a wonderful, diverse and thought-provoking programme, with so many different perspectives and examples of different ways social research can be ethically approached"*

## **Disability Rights and the NDIS**

*"Thanks to the panelists for important insights about the issues and also providing some hope going forward. I learnt a lot about the AAT processes and how the NDIS affects not only participants but advocates and families."*

## **The Human Rights of Young People**

*"Very helpful, informative from diverse aspects of the issue. Always appreciate the webinars you offer in order to inform us of your work, and the background behind major issues of concern."*

## **Compensation Owed to Victims of Alleged Australian War Crimes**

*"It was a great panel event. Informative and engaging. The panelists shared key insights that were critical but also encouraging of Australia to embrace responsibility to make the compensations."*

