

Justice Crusader

Colin Mc Donald QC receives National Civil Justice Award



Colin Mc Donald QC was announced as the winner of this year's Australian Lawyers Alliance national civil justice award at the non-profit organisation's national conference on Hamilton Island during October.

The award recognises unsung heroes who, despite personal risk or sacrifice, have fought to preserve individual rights, human dignity or safety. Recent past winners include: Malcolm Fraser, Cornelia Rau's lawyer Claire O'Connor and David Hicks' lawyer Major Michael Mori.

Mr Mc Donald was recognised for his tireless work to improve the rights of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory and the work he did in saving Australians Scott Rush and Renae Lawrence from the death penalty.

Mr Mc Donald, arrived at the conference direct from Jakarta and Bali, where a poor, powerless, young Nigerian man, Titus Ani, is in the final stages of his Supreme Court application to have his death penalty sentence overturned.

Mr Mc Donald said that:

"Use of the death sentence often depended on the delicate political pressures within countries and the existence of more than 220 poor, Indonesian migrant workers on death row outside Indonesia including: The Middle East, Malaysia and China and this had raised the issue more prominently with Indonesian citizens now questioning its use. Many ordinary Indonesian citizens reacted adversely and were upset by the beheading of a 54-year-old Indonesian domestic worker in Saudi Arabia for the killing of her employer in reported circumstances where self defence was involved.

The maid died on the eye-for-an-eye principle. This was disputed by Indonesian Sharia law experts in Indonesia as the

Indonesian Government was not accorded the diplomatic courtesy to be notified of the execution. Execution of migrant workers abroad, mainly women, has led to a whole public outcry about the death penalty generally.

In terms of Australian citizens facing the death penalty overseas Indonesians have the same burden but on a larger scale. And this is not something that is adequately comprehended here in Australia."

Mr Mc Donald QC was the subject of an ABC Australian Story profile in February 2006, where he discussed concerns about the role of the Australian Federal Police in handing over Australian citizens to a country that administered the death penalty when he pointed to 'a policy blackhole' in the AFP that was risking the lives of Australians caught up in trouble overseas. ●

2012 Advocacy Workshops - Update

The Law Society will be hosting the annual Advocacy Workshop in Darwin (13 -15 July) and Alice Springs (19 - 20 October), led by Chief Justice Riley and Rex Wild QC. These will be practical sessions with all participants expected to contribute and participate in role-playing as necessary. Participants will be mentored by senior, experienced members of the profession, with constructive commentary provided. If sufficient interest is received, the workshops may be streamed into civil and criminal sections. It is intended to include segments on making an application for injunction, criminal forfeiture proceedings, and a sentencing pleas with disputed facts. All of these will involve making submissions and, calling and cross examining witnesses. Due to past popularity of these workshops, early written expressions of interest are vital to secure a placement and are to be sent to karen.beach@lawsocnt.asn.au.