



LABOUR LAW SEMINAR

Prohibiting religious discrimination: Fundamental human rights and political reality intersect!

International human rights instruments guarantee a right to freedom of religion, however South Australian and Commonwealth anti-discrimination laws both fail to offer any protection against religious discrimination. South Australia's legislative "blank slate" in relation to religious discrimination could have been filled in many ways. However, the only substantive proposal in recent years has been an amendment to the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (SA) which was proposed in 2006. This amendment would have introduced a new prohibition on discrimination on the ground of religious appearance and dress, while failing to include a prohibition on discrimination based on religious belief or practice. The reasons for limiting the proposed prohibition appear to have been largely political – in particular there was significant opposition to a more expansive prohibition from Christian religious groups.

Why would opposition to a prohibition against religious discrimination have emerged from within religious groups? What does this suggest about the way that prohibitions of religious discrimination, and exceptions to such prohibitions, are viewed in the community? And does the failure in protection offer some insight into the political realities of anti-discrimination law?

To address these questions, this Labour Law Seminar will involve a panel including visiting scholar **Ms Anne Hewitt** and Melbourne Law School's **Associate Professor Beth Gaze**.

Ms Anne Hewitt is a Lecturer with the University of Adelaide Law School, where she teaches in evidence, procedure and anti-discrimination law. Anne's research interests include equality and anti-discrimination laws, native title and legal education. In 2003 Anne completed a Master of Laws degree at King's College London, University of London.

Associate Professor Beth Gaze joined the Melbourne Law School Staff in 2005. She is also a member of the Centre for Employment and Labour Relations Law. Beth's research interests include anti-discrimination and equality law, feminist legal thought, and administrative law including tribunals. She is currently engaged in a project on "Non-discrimination laws and religious freedom: current conflicts and future directions".

DATE: Thursday, 6th November 2008
TIME: 1:00 pm
PLACE: Room 920 (Level Nine)
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A light lunch will be served