

## LABOUR LAW SEMINAR

### His Master's Voice? Work Choices as a Return to Master and Servant Concepts

The Howard Government's Workplace Amendment (Work Choices) Act 2005 (Cth) was a curious mixture of government retreat from the labour market and government intervention. In this seminar, **Mary Gardiner** suggests that an explanation for this conundrum can be found by examining the legislation through the lens of master and servant concepts and laws. In particular, the feudal concept of status, where the dominance of masters and later employers was regarded as a natural right, has particular resonance in Work Choices. Mary will argue that not only was the purpose of Work Choices the coercion of labour but its underlying attitude towards employees as inferior was so feudal and antiquated it required particular prescriptive clauses in order to bring employers with more contemporary attitudes to the employment relationship into line. The echoes of master and servant concepts in Work Choices demonstrate the persistence and adaptability of the law as an instrument of labour coercion.

**Mary Gardiner** completed the Master of Labour Relations Law at Melbourne Law School last year and is a Commonwealth public servant, working in human resource management. Mary has previously lectured in organisational behaviour at RMIT. She has published in the *Sydney Law Review* and the *Australian Journal of Labour Law*, and has worked as a consultant to the International Labour Organisation.

**DATE:** Wednesday, 13 May 2009  
**TIME:** 1:00 pm  
**PLACE:** Room 920 (level 9)  
Melbourne Law School  
**RSVP:** Tessa Dermody  
Tel: (03) 8344 8924  
RSVP Online: <http://celrl.law.unimelb.edu.au/>

*Tea and coffee will be provided*