

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service invites you to webinar one of

UNLOCKING VICTORIAN JUSTICE

OPCAT: An opportunity to prevent the ill-treatment, torture and death of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody

Wednesday 3 March, 9am - 10am

Registration Link: tinyurl.com/UVJopcat

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. However, since this watershed report was handed down, at least 455 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have died in custody.

The objective of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) is 'to establish a system of regular visits undertaken by independent international and national bodies to places where people are deprived of their liberty, in order to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.' In 2017, Australia ratified OPCAT, and is required to set up detention oversight bodies, National Preventive Mechanisms, in all States and Territories (including Victoria) by January 2022.

At this critical moment, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service is honoured to host an international panel of OPCAT experts, who will discuss the role that OPCAT could play in the prevention of the death, torture and ill-treatment of people detained in Victoria, and across Australia.



Lidia Thorpe
Senator from
Victoria
Opening Speaker



**Professor Sir
Malcolm D Evans**
Former Chair of the
UN Subcommittee
for Prevention of
Torture (2011-2020)
Panellist



**Dr Matthew
Pringle**
Founder of the
Canada OPCAT
Project
Panellist



Dr Elina Steinerte
Vice-Chair United
Nations Working
Group on Arbitrary
Detention
Panellist



Ben Buckland
Senior Advisor at
Association for
the Prevention of
Torture
Panellist



Andreea Lachs
Senior Policy,
Research and
Advocacy Officer
at VALS
Panel Moderator



**Victorian Aboriginal
Legal Service**

You can find out more about the work of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service here vals.org.au, and support our work here vals.org.au/donate. You can read more about OPCAT implementation in Victoria in our COVID-19 Recovery Plan, *Building Back Better*, at tinyurl.com/valsBBB.

We acknowledge and respect the Wurundjeri people as the traditional custodians of the land that our office is located on.

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Lidia Thorpe

Senator from Victoria, Opening Speaker

Lidia Thorpe is a Gunaai-Gunditjmara politician, businesswoman and activist. She is currently a Senator for Victoria, representing the Australian Greens, and is also the first Aboriginal Senator from Victoria.

Born into a poor family in inner Melbourne's housing commission flats, Lidia Thorpe was raised to advocate for herself and those around her. After surviving domestic violence, Lidia raised three kids as a single mum and went on to university to study policy. This equipped her to advocate for women's rights, public health, environmental protection, public housing and child protection. Lidia is an active campaigner for social and environmental justice, and she is a sought-after facilitator, public speaker and commentator. In 2017, she was the first Aboriginal woman elected to Victorian parliament. As the Victorian Greens MP for Northcote, she held several portfolios including Aboriginal Affairs, mental health, consumer affairs and sport. In 2020 Lidia Thorpe entered the federal Parliament as a Greens Senator and the first Aboriginal Senator for Victoria. She is the national Greens spokesperson for First Nations, Justice, and Sport.



Professor Sir Malcolm D Evans, KCMG, OBE, FLSW

Former Chair of the UN Subcommittee for Prevention of Torture (2011-2020), Panellist

Sir Malcolm Evans is Professor of Public International Law at the University of Bristol, specialising in international human rights protection and the international law of the sea. His particular areas of focus concern torture and torture prevention, the protection of religious liberty under international law and the law relating to maritime boundaries. From 2009 - 2020 he was a member, and from 2011- 2020 Chair, of the UN Subcommittee for Prevention of Torture (the SPT). He is also a member of the UK Foreign Secretary's Human Rights Advisory Group and a Member of the Statutory Panel of Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales (IICSA). From 2002 - 2013 he was a member of the OSCE ODIHR Advisory Council on the Freedom of Religion or Belief. He is General Editor of the International and Comparative Law Quarterly and Co-Editor in Chief of the Oxford Journal of Law and Religion.



Dr Matthew Pringle

Founder of the Canada OPCAT Project, Panellist

Matthew Pringle has been active in the international human rights sphere since 1999, having worked long-term at, among other places, Amnesty International's International Secretariat in London and the Association for the Prevention of Torture in Geneva. He now lives and works in Ottawa, Canada, where he established the Canada OPCAT Project in mid-2018, a human rights information hub operating on a mere AUS\$200 a year, but lots of elbow grease. Matthew works full-time as the Director of the International Department of the Native Women's Association of Canada, Canada's second largest national Indigenous organization, located in Ottawa on the unceded, unsurrendered Territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation.

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Dr Elina Steinerte, LLB, Lawyers Diploma, LLM, PhD

Vice-Chair United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Panellist

Dr Steinerte is an academic and human rights lawyer with over 15 years of experience, residing in the Bailiwick of Guernsey. She is a member of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UN WGAD), appointed on 30 September 2016 and serving as its Vice Chair for four consecutive years. In this role Dr Steinerte has lead numerous UN missions including to Argentina, Sri Lanka, Hungary, Bhutan and Qatar. She has participated in the delivery of over 400 Opinions of the WGAD regarding allegations of arbitrary deprivation of liberty globally. She also lead the WGAD's work on the formulation of its Deliberations on detention in the context of migration in 2017 and detention in the context of public health emergencies (COVID-19) in 2020. In July 2019 she became the youngest serving Law Commissioner of the Jersey Law Commission.

Dr Steinerte is academic with extensive teaching background having taught public international and human rights law at numerous universities in Latvia, the United Kingdom and the Bailiwick of Jersey. The prime focus of her work and research, through the University of Bristol Human Rights Centre, has been the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol (OPCAT). She has worked worldwide with respect to the implementation of the Convention including advising upon the calibration of domestic legislation and the designation and effectiveness of National Preventive Mechanisms.



Ben Buckland

Senior Advisor at Association for the Prevention of Torture, Panellist

Ben Buckland is a Senior Advisor at Association for the Prevention of Torture, focusing on supporting strong and independent oversight institutions around the world. Prior to joining APT, he has worked with the Geneva Center for Security Sector Governance, Human Rights Watch, Refugee Survey Quarterly and Oxfam. He also documents human rights work as an internationally award-winning photographer.



Andreea Lachs

Senior Policy, Research and Advocacy Officer at VALS, Panel Moderator

Andreea Lachs is the Senior Policy, Research and Advocacy Officer at the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. She completed her Churchill Fellowship in 2019 on culturally appropriate OPCAT implementation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and has previously volunteered as a humanitarian observer with the Australian Red Cross, monitoring immigration detention facilities in Australia, Papua New Guinea and Nauru.