You are invited to a Legal Intersections Research Centre Panel Discussion on:

**Social Justice, Indigenous Australians and the Criminal Justice Systems**

This seminar, which will be held on 22 May, will showcase the work of three local presenters who have been involved with social and legal programs and claims that resulted from Indigenous people’s contact with the criminal justice system. This seminar has been scheduled to coincide with a South Coast Writers Centre event the following evening at the Wollongong City Gallery, which will focus on writing with Indigenous inmates and will present the outcome of a series of writing workshops with Indigenous men at Junee Correctional Centre (please contact Rika Krishnabhakdi-Vasilakis – Director South Coast Writer Centre, 02 4228 0151).

**Presenters**

Gail Wallace, Nowra Circle Court and Care Circle Coordinator

Gail Wallace, graduated with a Law Degree from the University of Wollongong in 1996. She has spent 36 years working in various roles with the Aboriginal Legal Service, the NSW Department of Education, the Department of Social Security (now Centrelink), the NSW Department of Attorney-General and Justice, the NSW Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council and the NSW Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. She has been working in her current role as Project Officer of Circle Sentencing in Nowra for 11 and a half years and during that time helped established the first Circle Court and Care Circle in Australia.

Her presentation focuses on how the establishment and use of Circle Sentencing in NSW better meets the needs of Indigenous offenders and how the introduction of Care Circles has further assisted Koori Communities in the Nowra region to cope with family disintegration. The two programs work together to help Indigenous offenders and their families to improve their lives.
Rob Powrie, Legal Consultant, Canberra

Rob Powrie was in private practice for 17 years before joining the Australian Government Solicitors Office in 2002. Whilst there he was seconded to ATSIC/ATSIS where he was Acting General Counsel. From June 2006 until December 2010 he was appointed as the Principal Legal Officer at the Kimberley Land Council working mainly in the area of Native Title, but also dealing with cultural heritage work and negotiations with mining companies. From February 2011 Rob has been a sole practitioner in his own firm where he is involved in native title, cultural heritage, corporate governance and commercial law work for Indigenous organisations.

His presentation focuses on the recognition and protection of existing traditional rights and interests. Often these rights are ignored or deliberately abused by the wider community. Indigenous people can defend their rights through the protective provisions of the Native Title system, by raising defences to criminal charges or seeking compensation for damage done or trespasses against traditional rights. The example he will discuss is the use of the Native Title Act 1983 (Cth) as a defence to charges under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* (NSW).

Kari Kristiansen, Human Rights Advocate

In 2006 Kari was the recipient of a High Commendation from the Australian Human Rights Commission for her work as an individual in promoting and protecting the human rights of Indigenous Australians. In 2010 in her capacity as co-founder of the Blank Page Summits on Suicide, Kari joined with Billard Learning Centre, in receiving the national LIFE Award for suicide prevention. She has worked all over Australia with federal, state and local governments, Indigenous organizations, communities, families and individuals in the key policy areas that have dominated the last 20 years in Indigenous affairs – law, land, housing, governance, human services, employment and economic development. She holds degrees in Arts and Law including a Masters in Law from Sydney University and lives in Wombarra. She is co-founder of the Blackground Report, an innovative think tank focused on Indigenous issues.

Her talk will contextualise Indigenous offending, particularly in remote communities. She will explain how family, social, political, cultural and policy frameworks are all linked in continuing the chronic and systemic disadvantage of Indigenous Australians and how this context ultimately influences their likelihood of offending.