



Aims and Activities of the Programme

General aims:

1. To promote discussion and study of contemporary issues of public international law, combining clear conceptual analysis with knowledge of how it works in practice;
2. To develop comparative approaches to public international law, examining issues in international practice from a variety of different regional and national perspectives;
3. To highlight and critique British practice of public international law;
4. To foster links between PIL lawyers across government departments and embassies, private practice, the judiciary, academe and the non-profit sector;
5. To encourage participation of early career public international lawyers in the activities of the Watts programme, especially in identifying and shaping the issues of the future.



Activities

Partnership with the Law School of Melbourne University:

The Institute is pleased to announce that the Arthur Watts Fellow will have the opportunity to develop collaboration with academics at the Law School of Melbourne University. This partnership will enable Visiting Research Fellows and interns from the University and the Institute to work together in areas of common significance and interest. Discussions are in progress on the form of the first project and the visits programme commenced in June 2012.

Areas of law that the Fellow may be involved in through research and organization of events are:

Treaty law and practice:

The first Watts Fellow (Jill Barrett) is ideally placed to develop the Institute as a centre of expertise on treaty law and practice, treaty procedures, and treaty negotiation and drafting. Using her network of contacts in the treaty departments of Foreign Ministries and international organisations, the Institute is undertaking applied comparative research on treaty law and practice and developing a programme of professional training and capacity-building.

These studies will not only illuminate the approach of a range of states and organisations to a subject at the core of international law; they will also inform the international law of treaties by obtaining evidence of state practice on questions such as the definition of a treaty, the procedures used for ratification of treaties and depositary practice.

The first research project of the Watts programme has commenced in collaboration with the Centre for International Law, Singapore (CIL), bringing together treaty professionals from a range of governments in South-East Asia and international organizations to exchange views and information on treaty practices and problems, to develop a collection of best treaty practices and to provide training and information for those in government who deal with treaties, especially in new States and others forming treaty departments for the first time.



The Antarctic Treaty system as a model for the successful management of intractable disputes:

The Antarctic Treaty has been successful in promoting peace and international co-operation in the Antarctic region over the past half century. This research would assess the adequacy of the international legal framework to address current and future challenges to the Antarctic region, in particular the growth of tourism and the resulting threats to the environment, increasing interest in the potential for biological prospecting, the status of resources on the seabed and the effects of climate change. It would also look at the extent to which the Antarctic Treaty has already served as a model for managing sovereignty disputes elsewhere, and at the potential for applying these concepts in the future to other disputed areas such as the Arctic.



Customary international law as applied in national courts:

This project will compare the way in which national courts in selected jurisdictions around the world interpret and apply customary international law in judicial decisions. A comparison will be made of the way in which courts identify rules of customary international law and the criteria they apply to determining whether and when a new rule has become established. This study will not only illuminate the similarities and differences in national judicial practices in common law, civil law and other types of legal systems, it will also record and analyse general trends in a very important component of state practice.

Evidence before International Courts and Tribunals:

The Watts Fellow would lead research building on the success of the Institute's first project in this field - directly supported by Sir Arthur - on evidence before the International Court of Justice, which was published in 2009. The methodology would be extended to other international tribunals, in areas such as international investment law, international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international criminal law. This would contribute to greater coherence and predictability in the operation of international courts and tribunals.

