

TO: ANU GENDER INSTITUTE

FROM: DESMOND MANDERSON, CENTRE FOR LAW ARTS AND HUMANITIES

RE: UTOPIA 500

In recognition of the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Thomas More's *Utopia*, one of the key books in the Western humanist tradition, the Centre, in conjunction with the National Library of Australia and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, organized a major public event at the National Library. The event featured a discussion about the modern relevance of concepts of utopia, and featured leading international academics and writers: Alexis Wright, Peter Singer, Russell Jacoby, and Jacqueline Dutton. Bios for these contributors can be found on the web site for this event:

<https://law.anu.edu.au/event/forum/utopia-500>

The roundtable was hosted by Paul Barclay, host of ABC's Big Ideas program on Radio National. The event was a rousing success. It attracted a full house – 300 people in the National Library's main theatre – and was also reported on by the ABC and the Canberra Times. The program was later broadcast on Big Idea. You can see more about this, and download the audio file of the event, here:

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/utopia-dreaming/8461396>

The discussion on the night was very wide ranging, and included important perspectives concerning the (fraught) relationship between Indigenous people and Western Utopias (particularly through the contribution of leading Indigenous writer Alexis Wright. Questions about the history of utopias in Australia, and the role of feminism and feminist utopias in shaping that history, were handled with exceptional skill and aplomb by Professor Jacqueline Dutton (Melbourne). So the GI funding, which contributed to the appearance of both Wright and Dutton, was both a crucial element in realizing this event, and helped shape the questions and discussions on the night.

In addition to the exceptional publicity the public event provided for the ANU, the Centre, and supporters including the Gender Institute, the event consolidated a collaborative relationship between our centre, the National Library and the ABC, and arrangements are already underway to explore another event in the next year or so. The event would not have been possible without the support of the Gender Institute and is a further example of both the range of activities the institute supports, and the exceptional influence it wields through relatively modest amounts of funding. I cannot speak highly enough about its efficacy and value to this University and to so many events and activities.

Desmond Manderson

1 Dec 2017