

## THE INAUGURAL QUEER SCU DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION LECTURE

On Thursday, 4 August 2016, the Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG delivered the inaugural Queer SCU (QSCU) Diversity and Inclusion public lecture. This event was hosted by QSCU, in association with LEXSA (Lismore and External Students Association) and the Equity and Diversity Office. QSCU is a student run LGBTIQ ('Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Intersex and Queer') society which promotes inclusivity, respect and awareness of gender diversity on the Lismore campus at Southern Cross University. QSCU aims to bridge the gap of understanding between the LGBTIQ community, the University and the wider community.

The idea to host an annual QSCU Diversity and Inclusion Public Lecture came up during a small gathering of a few passionate LGBTIQ advocates based at the Lismore campus. At that time, we believed that an event to promote respect, tolerance and awareness of LGBTIQ-related issues was needed – an event where LGBTIQ students, staff and their allies could come together and be inspired. We all agreed that there was no better person to deliver the first lecture than Mr Kirby. Knowing that, on the same day, Mr Kirby was scheduled to visit Southern Cross' Gold Coast Campus to attend the 10th School of Law and Justice Kirby Lecture, QSCU contacted Director of Research, Professor Bee Chen Goh, and asked for her permission to invite Mr Kirby to deliver the inaugural QSCU Diversity and Inclusion Public Lecture, in Lismore.

The topic of that lecture – 'The Journey to Equality: where to from here?' – was chosen to enable reflection on the then-recent shooting in Orlando and the proposed plebiscite on same-sex marriage in Australia. In his lecture, Mr Kirby spoke eloquently about his opposition to the plebiscite, the importance of the Safe Schools program and the need to promote and defend gay rights at home but also overseas. Mr Kirby argued that a plebiscite would give a platform for hateful and harmful discussion directed towards the LGBTIQ community. He also examined the importance of the Safe Schools program to promote acceptance of diversity and to send a message to the young people that bullying based on someone else's gender, sexuality and sexual orientation or gender identity is unacceptable and 'not cool'. And Mr Kirby suggested the need for Australians to be concerned about the violence and discrimination directed towards the LGBTIQ community in overseas locations.

The editors of the Review approached Mr Kirby to request permission to publish his QSCU Public Lecture speech in this edition of the Southern Cross University Law Review. Given the dialogical nature of his speech, Mr Kirby recommended that instead the Review re-publish a speech he had delivered for the 2015 Michael Whincop Memorial Lecture at the State Library of Queensland. Despite the somewhat different contexts for the QSCU Diversity and Inclusion Public Lecture and the Michael Whincop Memorial Lecture, on both occasions, Mr Kirby discussed the issue of same-sex marriage in Australia and highlighted the role of the Australian Federal Parliament, which has the power to legislate on this particular issue.

That lecture follows – in it, Mr Kirby gives a passionate reflection on the life of the late Michael Whincop, a brilliant, generous, distinguished man and scholar. Mr Kirby also discusses, in a technical manner, the meaning of ‘marriage’ and the role of the High Court of Australia in interpreting the Australian Constitution in regards of same-sex marriage, particularly in the ACT Marriage Equality Case.

QSCU would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Kirby for delivering such a powerful and inspiring lecture that marks an auspicious beginning to our QSCU Diversity and Inclusion Lecture series. His lecture reminded us to continue the fight for equality and justice for the LGBTIQ community. QSCU would also like to thank the School of Law and Justice for its ongoing support and looks forward to continuing our association into the future.

Ronny Susanto  
President, QSCU