

## FACULTY ANNOUNCEMENT

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28 July 2008

### Faculty of Law hosts prestigious biennial Obligations Conference

“THE GOALS OF PRIVATE LAW”  
OBLIGATIONS IV CONFERENCE 2008  
23 to 25 July 2008

The National University of Singapore (NUS) Law School together with Singapore Academy of Law and Melbourne Law School have successfully organised the Fourth Biennial Conference on the Law of Obligations at NUS Law School's Bukit Timah campus from 23 to 25 July 2008 (“Obligations IV”). The Obligations series is one of the leading conferences in the Commonwealth on private law and was held for the first time outside Australia. The Law of Obligations comprises the law of contract, tort, unjust enrichment and equity.

The theme of this year's conference was "The Goals of Private Law". This conference focused on one of the most hotly contested issues in private law scholarship in the last 20 years: the function and purposes of private law. A large and influential body of scholarship is based on the idea that private law is essentially an instrument of regulation, and therefore ought to be shaped primarily or exclusively by external policy goals. Another highly influential body of scholarship argues that policy has no legitimate role to play in private law and that private law can only be understood from an internal perspective. Many papers in this conference have asked whether private law can legitimately pursue external goals and analysed what goals private law might be said to pursue. Scholars at this conference also investigated whether the pursuit of such goals could be accommodated within the constraints of private law litigation, which must do justice to the individual plaintiff and defendant before the court.

The three-day conference included over 30 panel sessions and showcased the who's who in private law. The participants at this conference included presentations from world-renowned professors from law schools such as Cambridge, Cornell, Durham, HKU, LSE, McGill, Monash, Melbourne, Nottingham, NUS, Oxford, Sydney, SMU, Toronto, Tel-Aviv, UCL, UNSW and UPenn. Many Deans and former Deans of leading law schools also attended this conference. The Deans in attendance included Dean Tan Cheng Han (NUS), Dean Michael Furmston (SMU), Dean Hanoch Dagan (Tel-Aviv), Dean Mayo Moran (Toronto) and Dean Cheong May Fong (University of Malaya). Former Deans in attendance included Professor Charles Rickett (Queensland) and Professor David Campbell (Durham).

The keynote speakers for this conference included The Rt. Hon. Lord Leonard Hoffman, who has been described by BBC as "the cleverest law lord of his generation" and hailed by the Times of London as one who is "revered for his intellectual brilliance". Since his appointment as a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary in 1995, Lord Hoffman has presided over numerous landmark decisions in both the Privy Council and the House of Lords, the highest court in the United Kingdom. His Lordship delivered his keynote address on "The Case for Having a Duty of Care". The other key note speakers were Professor Stephen Perry, prominent legal philosopher and legal theorist from UPenn, and, Dean Hanoch Dagan from Tel Aviv, widely considered as the leading light in restitution, property and private law theory.