YOUNG & RESILIENT RESEARCH CENTRE

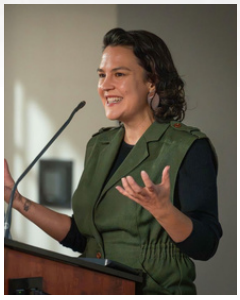
Y&R 2026 SEMINAR SERIES

12 August: Michelle Catanzaro & Varsha Yajman

More than a placard: The power of youth-generated visual evidence in climate decision making

This presentation draws on recent research conducted by the authors (Associate Professor Michelle Catanzaro and Varsha Yajman), that aims to open new pathways for validating young people's creative expression as evidence suitable for climate decision making, across legal, policy and research contexts. They argue that young people's placards, carried at climate protests are a form of community evidence demonstrating young people's expertise by experience (Kakade, 2023). The authors combined lived experiences inform this work as Catanzaro has observed the nuance, insight and knowledge in young people's visual languages and Yajman has seen first-hand the impact that legal routes can have on climate policy and narratives.

The presentation will draw on data from the Australian School Strike for Climate movement, situating young people's visual evidence within the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change (2025) (ICJ), which recognises the disproportionate impacts of climate change on children and young people. In doing this, they make a case for how protest data can function as dual evidence, demonstrating that young people are both credible witnesses with real experiences of climate harm, and capable communicators who can translate those experiences into strategic political messages. This presentation issues a call to develop protocols that treat youth-generated visual evidence not as supplementary material, but as a legitimate and necessary contribution to climate justice.



Associate Professor Michelle Catanzaro - Head of Discipline, Design and Animation Sciences, School of Arts, Western Sydney University



Varsha Yajman - lawyer, digital content producer, youth climate activist and research associate at the Young and Resilient Research Centre at Western Sydney University

Biography

Associate Professor Michelle Catanzaro is a visual communication researcher, design educator, photographer, activist and mother who has been documenting the SS4C movement since 2019. She is currently Head of Discipline, Design and Animation and a research fellow at the Young and Resilient Research Centre (YRRC). Varsha Yajman is a lawyer, digital content producer for Cheek media, youth climate justice advocate and research associate at YRRC. Yajman joined the climate movement as a 16 year old and proceeded to become one of the key organisers of the 2019 School Strikes, helping to mobilise over 350,000 people across Australia nationally. Since then, she has worked in climate litigation, climate justice organised in the South Asian community and works to amplify marginalised voices that are the most impacted by climate change.

12 August 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Parramatta South EZ.1.57 & online

Lunch will be provided