YOUNG & RESILIENT RESEARCH CENTRE

Y&R 2026 SEMINAR SERIES

April 8: Dr Maria Bhatti and Dr Sandy Noakes

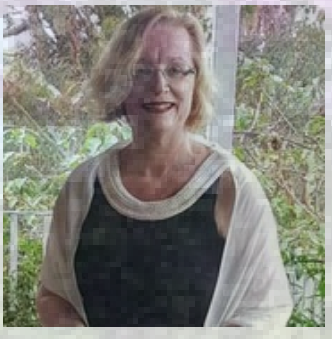
Belonging, Identity and the Law: Muslim Law Students' Experiences in Legal Education and the Profession



Dr Maria Bhatti

Despite increasing diversity in Australian law schools, there is very little empirical research examining how students from religiously and culturally marginalised backgrounds experience legal education and the transition into legal practice. This seminar presents findings from a qualitative study of Muslim law students conducted at Western Sydney University, drawing on focus group data to explore experiences of belonging, representation and identity in law school and the legal profession.

The presentation examines how diverse law school environments can function as 'safe spaces' that foster belonging, while also revealing a sharp disjuncture as students anticipate or enter professional legal settings. Particular attention is given to gendered discrimination, intersectionality and the ways in which Muslim women experience heightened marginalisation. The seminar also considers the role of the law curriculum in shaping students' experiences, including how Islam is discussed and taught, and the emotional and identity-based labour placed on Muslim students in classroom settings



Dr Sandy Noakes

Biography

Dr Maria Bhatti is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Law at Western Sydney University whose research focuses on the intersections of law and religion, including Muslim students' experiences of belonging, identity and inclusion within legal education.

Dr Sandy Noakes is an Associate Professor and Horizon Educator in the University of Sydney Law School. Her research explores systems of governance in employment and education that shape and sometimes limit people's opportunities and choices, with a focus on how these systems can be reformed to create more equitable outcomes.

8 April, 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Online - via Zoom