

Gendering the Law - First Edition



FROM THE CHAIR

At a time of rapid technological change and deepening political contestation over gender equality, the stakes for how law is written are at their highest in many years. Laws structure whose lives are visible, whose harms are recognised and whose experiences are treated as incidental. Yet too often, gender equality is embedded in law as an aspiration rather than an outcome-driven process.

The establishment of the Chair in Gender and the Law at UTS is an opportunity to shift both conversation and practice. The support of the Minderoo Foundation is enabling work that begins from this premise: if we want gender

equality in practice, we need far more rigorous ways to rethink the writing of law. Through initiatives such as the [Gender Legislative Index](#), this program is building a global evidence base that shows where laws are genuinely gender-responsive, where they fall short and what alternatives exist beyond the usual reference points in the Global North.

The urgency of this work is reflected in the themes that recur across this newsletter: artificial intelligence that reproduces gendered harms, online spaces that enable abuse with impunity, and legal frameworks that gesture towards equality without meaningfully transforming the lives of a diversity of women. These are not marginal issues. They go to the heart of how accountability, protection and participation are structured today.

This moment demands more than critique. It demands coordinated research, credible benchmarks and sustained engagement with law-makers and institutions—domestically and internationally. Much of the work captured in this newsletter reflects that effort: intervening in public debate, engaging with international accountability mechanisms and supporting emerging scholars to push this field forward.

This newsletter is not simply a record of achievements. It is part of a broader project of insisting that law can—and must—do better. Above all, it is driven by a commitment to centring the lives of women and gender-diverse people in how law is conceived, evaluated and re-written.

If you want to contribute to this change agenda, please get in touch.

[Connect with Ramona →](#)

GENDER, LAW AND THE HEADLINES

The Conversation

The Lowy Institute's
Interpreter - 30 Jan 2026

Earlier this year, Ramona Vijeyarasa published *Most AI assistants are feminine – and it’s fuelling dangerous stereotypes and abuse* in [The Conversation](#) (27 January 2026).

Drawing on collaborative research with [Julie Kowald](#), Principal Delivery Manager, Digital Solutions and UX at UTS Rapido Social Impact, the article examines how the feminisation of AI assistants normalises gendered subordination and enables widespread verbal and sexual abuse, with implications for both social norms and regulatory design. If you have heard the new Google Gemini assistant in your car in Australia, you may have noticed its new default voice is now male.

[Read the full article →](#)

ABC Radio National’s Law Report

In February 2026 Ramona discussed *How useful is AI in creating better legal outcomes and processes?* The conversation explored the promise of AI in law alongside its capacity to automate bias, underscoring the need for strong accountability and human-rights-based safeguards.

[Listen here →](#)

Together with Sydney University’s [Lucy Quinn](#), Ramona published *Why Vietnam’s retirement age laws fail women and hold back the state* in The Lowy Institute’s Interpreter. The article analyses how ongoing gender discrimination in retirement age laws undermines women’s leadership, economic security and public-sector effectiveness, demonstrating the limits of partial reform.

[Read the underlying research →](#)

[Read the full article →](#)

ABC Radio National’s Life Matters

Ramona in conversation with Teagan Taylor discusses whether the gender of AI assistants really matters and explaining why seemingly innocuous design choices can reinforce harmful stereotypes and shape everyday behaviour.

[Listen here →](#)

The Lowy Institute's Interpreter - 6 Mar 2026

Most recently, Ramona published *Australia needs to put gender-responsive budgeting into law* in The Lowy Institute's *The Interpreter*. Drawing on comparative research, the piece argues that Australia's early leadership on gender-responsive budgeting has eroded in the absence of a legislative mandate and makes the case for embedding gender analysis in budget law as a matter of democratic accountability.

[Read the article →](#)

[Read the underlying research →](#)

LAW REFORM IN ACTION

UN work on gender stereotypes: Our contribution

Ramona, together with UTS PhD scholar [Tzili Mor](#), coordinated a global group of scholars to respond to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's draft General Recommendation No. 41 on gender stereotypes. Our [submission](#) welcomed the Committee's effort to address how stereotypes drive discrimination, reinforce unequal power and validate gender-based violence. However, we recommended a broader approach that recognises how stereotypes affect all genders, not only women. It called for stronger recognition of the impact of gender stereotypes on men and how framing masculinity only as "toxic" fails to offer positive alternatives, creating space for resentment and harmful narratives to grow. We called for clearer real-world examples to guide meaningful law reform including in relation to stereotypes in caregiving, politics, sport and digital technologies.

Talanoa: Women Parliamentarians and Law Reform



Ramona recently took part in a Talanoa dialogue with women MPs from Victoria and across the Pacific, hosted by the Victorian Legislative Council. Talanoa—a traditional word used in the Pacific to refer to inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue—created space to discuss policy tools, but also reflect on the lived experiences of women parliamentarians often working as one of only a few women, or the sole woman, in Parliament. The exchange underscored that gender-responsive law-making depends as much on institutional processes as on individual political courage, persistence and capacity. Ramona shared the session with Hannah Pronesti from Plan International Australia, who presented insights from the [Gender Compass project](#).

Gender-responsive regulation of labour and mining

On 25 June, a [class action](#) was commenced in the Federal Court of Australia against Fortescue, alleging failures to protect female workers from sexual harassment, sex-based harassment and a hostile workplace environment at its mining operations. The Chair and research team are deeply concerned about these serious allegations and the broader challenges women workers

continue to face, particularly in male-dominated industries. We will be closely following the proceedings, which are likely to test the practical operation of the positive duty introduced under [Australia's sex discrimination framework](#), requiring employers to take proactive steps to eliminate unlawful workplace conduct. The Chair acknowledges the statement issued in response to the filing of the class action by [Andrew Forrest, Fortescue Executive Chairman and Founder](#), including that “any form of harassment or discrimination is unacceptable”.

The Gender Legislative Index has long engaged with questions of gender-responsive regulation of workplaces. The Index has established [benchmarks](#) that call for gender-responsive regulation of the extractives industry, including requirements for gender-responsive workplace facilities for women miners such as toilets, showers, wash basins and changing facilities, as well as clear legal obligations on corporations to prevent gender-based violence and to provide effective responses and remedies when harm occurs.

The Gender Legislative Index has also highlighted the gender-blind nature of aspects of [Australia's workplace health and safety framework](#) that historically limited access to justice for women workers. The 2022 reforms that imposed a positive duty on employers sought to address these longstanding gaps, making this case an important test of whether Australia's legal framework can deliver meaningful prevention, accountability and redress for women in the mining industry. A genuinely gender-responsive workplace is not simply one where harm is less likely to occur. It is one where women trust that when harm occurs, they will be heard, respected and protected.

WHAT WE ARE WORKING ON

Over the coming months, we are scaling the [Gender Legislative Index \(GLI\)](#) to thirty countries, capturing diverse regional experiences of gender-responsive law-making from across the world. Our initial focus will be on evaluating regulation of artificial intelligence, online safety and supply chains with a gender lens. If you are a lawyer with relevant expertise and would like to join

the GLI Lab of evaluators, please contact [Zoe](#) so we can let you know more about the opportunity.

TEAM SPOTLIGHT

Welcome Zoe Giacomini

Zoe brings a strong background of high level administration experience to the program. Originally starting her career working within office management roles in private industry. Zoe joined UTS in 2022, previously working within the Central Research Office and the Faculty of Engineering & IT.



[Connect with Zoe →](#)

OUR VISITORS

UC Berkeley's Sonia Katyal visits UTS Law



The Roger J. Traynor Distinguished Chair and Co-Director of the Berkeley Center for Law and Technology, [Prof. Sonia Katyal](#), visited the Faculty in June.

Sonia's paper, 'The Gender Panopticon: Artificial Intelligence, Gender, and Design Justice' raised the question, what are the consequences for non-binary and transgender populations when a binary system of gender merges with the binary nature of code? Studied through the lens of automated body scanners, facial recognition, and content filtering on social media, Sonia unpacked how the law can and should respond. Stay tuned for the recording.

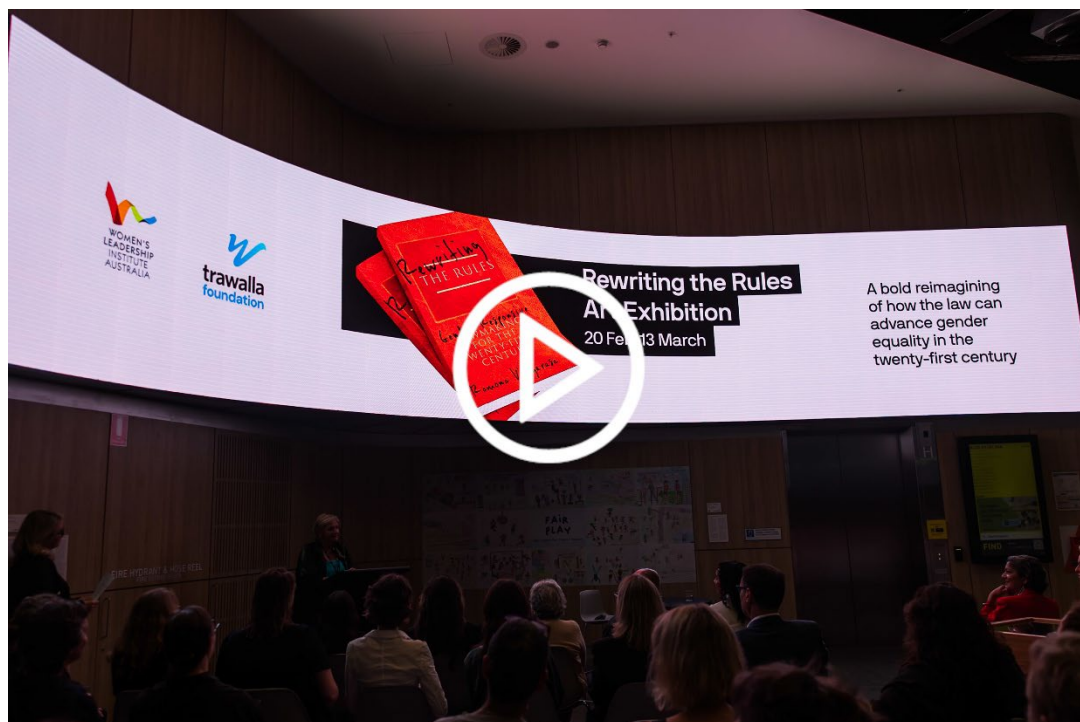


If you are keen to be a visitor or collaborator with the program, please do get in touch by contacting [Zoe Giacomini](#).

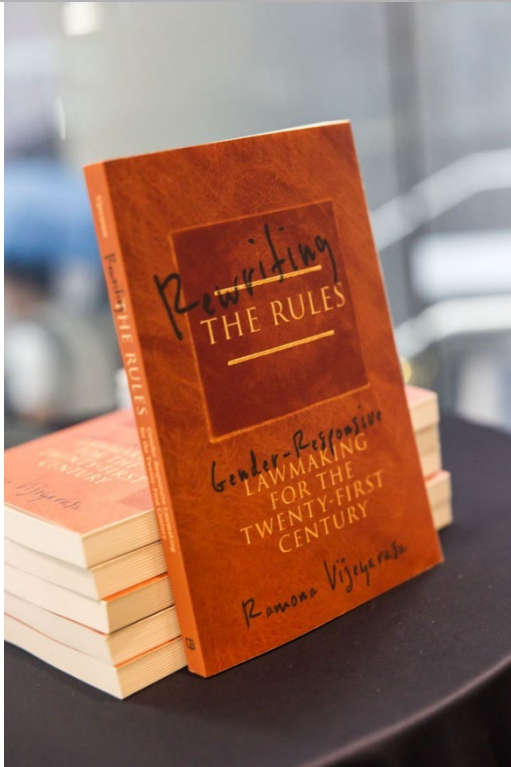
IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Ramona's new book, *Rewriting the Rules: Gender-Responsive Lawmaking for the Twenty-First Century* (University of California Press, 2026), was launched at UTS alongside a phenomenal art exhibition that brought feminist legal scholarship vividly to life. Featuring compelling artworks and striking films across ceramics, collage and participatory media, the exhibition invited

audiences to experience law not as abstract doctrine, but as something human, emotive and urgent—centred on a simple yet radical question: what would law look like if it were designed around women’s lives, realities and constraints?



The book is available for free download via open access. Made possible through the generous support of the Women’s Leadership Institute Australia and the Trawalla Foundation—ensuring these ideas reach far beyond the academy and into the hands of anyone interested in re-thinking how law can drive real gender equality.



Book available open access

[Download now →](#)



Rewriting the Rules: Law
Brought to Life Through Art

[Check out the exhibition →](#)

ON THE HORIZON

In July, Ramona will attend the [OECD's Gender Equality Forum on Harnessing the Digital Transformation for All](#) (8-9 July 2026). She will report back on whether the conversation moves beyond bureaucratic discussions of digital inclusion to confront the harder questions of the day: including platform power, democratic backsliding, anti-feminist mobilisation and the gendered harms embedded in global technology systems. Please reach out to Ramona directly if you have any research-driven contributions she can bring along to the Forum.

This newsletter was made possible thanks to the generous funding of the Minderoo Foundation.