



PHD STUDENT PROFILES 2011



ALISON MCLENNAN, PhD

Alison was interested in the way in which science and law interact in fields such as bioethics, intellectual property, health law, environmental law and biosecurity. She decided to undertake research in legal issues relating to a new field of biotechnology called synthetic biology. "Synthetic biology goes beyond previous genetic technology by trying to construct whole organisms from scratch in the laboratory, as well as attempting to engineer organisms which have functions that do not exist in nature. This raises a whole range of interesting legal, ethical and policy issues" Alison says.

Alison has been interested in an academic career since she was an undergraduate student, so undertaking a PhD was a natural progression. "I enjoyed my honours project and wanted to have the opportunity to do an in-depth research project. I also chose this path because I enjoy teaching".

"I wanted to work with some of the outstanding academics at ANU. I really enjoyed the College culture when I was an undergraduate and thought that I would enjoy being part of this environment. ANU also provides excellent opportunities for gaining teaching skills and experience" Alison says.



BRAD JESSUP, PhD

Before completing a Masters degree in Geography at the University of Cambridge, Brad Jessup spent four years in Melbourne practising as an environmental and planning lawyer.

He chose the ANU College of Law to undertake a research PhD so he could 'work alongside some wonderful minds and be supervised by highly talented and well respected researchers'. He has also found that 'the ANU opens up lots of opportunities abroad. It is a well known and high respected brand internationally'.

'I am researching concepts of environmental and ecological justice within Australia's environmental laws. I am exploring three case studies, and asking whether the process and outcomes were just, and how the law might be changed to achieve environmental and ecological justice. My case studies are the Channel Deepening Project in Port Phillip in Victoria, the Wielangta Forest dispute in Tasmania and the Orange Waste Project in regional New South Wales,' Brad said.

'My research is much more cosmopolitan and transdisciplinary than simply 'legal research'. In fact most of the PhD students at the College are no longer simply legal researchers. I am researching about laws, but I am less interested about what the laws state, rather I want to know what they stand for and how they are understood and employed by the community. For me, this is far more interesting and challenging than offering advice to clients. I also get a chance to pose and answer my own questions that really are of interest to society,' he said.



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FANNY THORNTON, PhD

Prior to commencing her PhD at the ANU College of Law, Fanny Thornton was working in the area of refugee advocacy. She realised that many of the issues that arose during her work could be fully explored by undertaking a research degree.

Fanny, originally from Germany, is researching Climate Change Displacement and International Law. "I chose to undertake my research at ANU, because of the Law School's strong focus on international law," Fanny says. "One of the best things about research at the ANU College of Law is the level of supervision available and the efforts made to integrate research students into the College's academic community."

Fanny says that after she has completed her research degree, she hopes to continue in a research career as an academic or to work for an international organisation involved in refugee or migration issues.



MICHAEL PHILLIS, PhD

After studying a combined degree in Arts (Ancient Greek) and Law at ANU, Michael Phillis decided to take a year to get admitted and work before undertaking a PhD in legal research.

'I was originally interested in legal theory, but since my final year and my undergraduate honours project I have been more interested in English and Australian administrative law. My current project is more abstract, but essentially linked to that project. The ability to set my own agenda and undertake a project that would be stimulating and challenging probably sums up why I decided to pursue research,' he said.

Michael's research focus is comparative public law in Australia, the UK, and the US, with specific interest in conceptions of legality.

'I already had some familiarity with the faculty at ANU, and to my good fortune I was advised that the best supervisor for my area of interest was at ANU. The faculty are eminently approachable, and the ability of the Law School to attract eminent people is remarkable,' he said.

When asked how he hopes to use his research, Michael said it was a little premature to answer this but as 'ANU has good connections with other countries, it would certainly be nice to travel a little for comparative work'.