

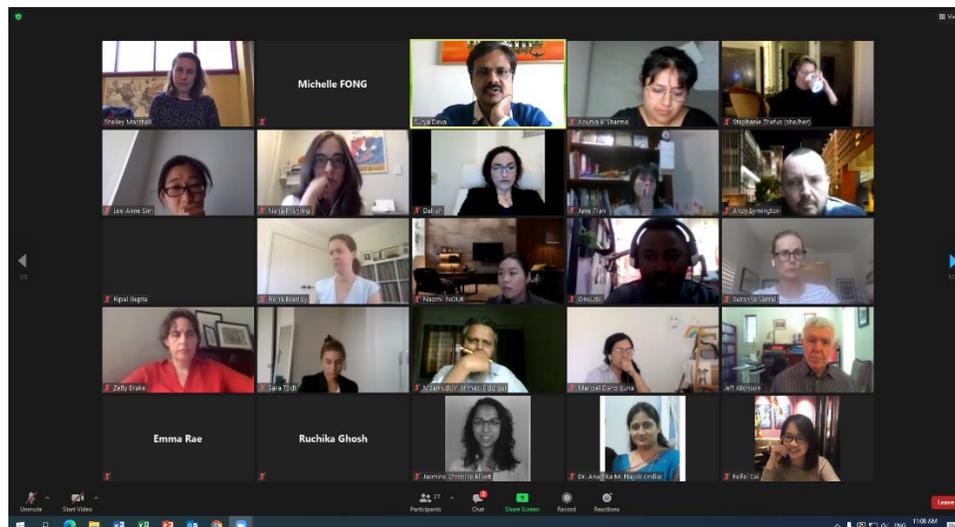


## 2021 Asia & Oceania Business & Human Rights Doctoral Symposium

**Shaping the business and human agenda of the next decade: 3, 4, 9th February 2021, 2 – 6pm AEST (11am – 3 pm HKT), Online**

Michelle Fong  
9 February 2021

On 3, 4 and 9 February 2021, the Business and Human Rights Centre (BHRIGHT) at College of Business and Law, RMIT University and the Public Law and Human Rights Forum (CPLR) at School of Law, City University of Hong Kong (CityU) organised the three-day online Symposium for nurturing the next generation of business and human rights doctoral scholars in Asia and Oceania. It provided an international learning platform for the participants in the fields of business ethics, business and human rights, corporate accountability and sustainable enterprises. Twenty-six PhD students from Asia-Oceania participated in this Symposium.





Dr. Shelley Marshall (left) and Dr. Surya Deva (right) delivered the welcome speech and introduced the purpose of this Symposium

On the first day, the Symposium started with welcoming remarks by **Dr. Shelley Marshall** (BRIGHT Director, College of Business and Law, RMIT University) and **Dr. Surya Deva** (CPLR Associate Director, School of Law, CityU). They first greeted and thanked all the doctoral participants for joining the Symposium. **Dr. Shelley Marshall** then explained the purpose and format of this Symposium to the participants.

The introduction was followed by the “Research presentations in groups with Commentators” session. During the first two days of the Symposium, PhD scholars were divided into small groups with commentators, presenting their existing research to peers and selected experts while receiving constructive feedback from them. On 3 February 2021, commentators included **Prof. Vasanthi Srinivasan** (Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore), **Dr. Joanna Kyriakakis** (Faculty of Law, Monash University), **Prof. Fiona Haines** (School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne), and **Dr. Jonathan Kolieb** (Graduate School of Business and Law, RMIT University). On 4 February 2021, commentators included **Dr. Kate Grosser** (School of Management, RMIT University), **Prof. Sang Soo Lee** (School of Law, Sogang University), **Dr. Surya Deva**, **Prof. Alan Lowe** (School of Accounting, Information Systems and Supply Chain, RMIT University), and **Prof. Jolyon Ford** (Associate Dean (International) of ANU College of Law, Australian National University).



Dr. Andy Hall (left) and Ms. Poonsap Tulaphan (right) shared their working experience in promoting business and human rights with local organisations.

The second session was the parallel “Training Session” with selected experts. Training Session One was the “Using Social Media for influencing”. **Dr. Andy Hall** (Human Rights Defender and Migrant Worker Rights Specialist) shared his experience in linking research and practice, collaborating with local organisations in Thailand, and using social media to amplify research findings. Training Session Two was the “Collaboration and networking”. **Ms. Poonsap Tulaphan** (Manager, Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion (HomeNet Thailand)) and **Dr. Shelley Marshall** shared their experiences in

working with the government and public sector organisations, and bringing people together with different interests.



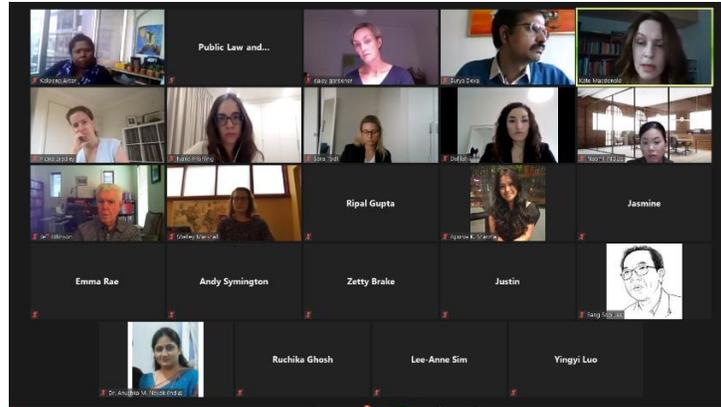
Dr. Surya Deva (left) and Dr. Usha Ramanathan (right) shared their views on the future of business and human rights.

The last session of the first day was “Exchange with Thought Leaders”. This open session attracted around 45 participants. **Dr. Usha Ramanathan** (Independent Lawyer and Legal Researcher) emphasised that social movement is important in the business and human rights field. Where COVID-19 showed technology would be the “master” in the future, people should pay attention to protect their privacy (in particular where smartphones have put under surveillance by states and companies). **Dr. Surya Deva** was worried that business and human rights might end up becoming a next type of corporate social responsibility (i.e., “the business of human rights” rather than “business and human rights”). Over the past 35 years, the progress in promoting business respect for human rights has been slow. Where the UN has endorsed the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, they are yet not having a real impact on the ground. Most states have failed in establishing and enforcing binding regulations in securing workers’ rights and regulating corporate conduct. In their views, everyone has a role to play in protecting human rights, and states bear the most responsibility in doing so. Where companies have used people’s data for business purposes and invaded privacy, states should be most culpable as well. It is the government’s duty to protect its people and regulate companies’ actions. If a government makes law for its people, the law should apply to the government itself as well.



Prof. Fiona McGaughey (left) and Prof. Justine Nolan (right) were giving the parallel training session to the PhD participants.

The second day of Symposium started with the parallel “Training Session”. Training Session Three was on “Publishing”. **Prof. Fiona McGaughey** (UWA Law School, University of Western Australia) shared her experience in publishing as a journal editor (Third Sector Review), co-editor of the Edward Elgar *Research Handbook on Art and Law*, and a former PhD student. Training Session Four was “Influencing Law and Policy Reform”. **Prof. Justine Nolan** (Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales) shared her experience in bringing law and policy reforms. To get your voice heard and carry out reforms, it would be better to do it in groups rather than alone.



In the last session, “Exchange with Thought Leaders”, of the second day symposium, **Ms. Kalpona Akter** (Founder and Executive Director, Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity) shared her experience in campaigning for worker safety, fair wages and the right to join and organize in labour unions. **Dr. Kate Macdonald** (School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne) shared her experience in conducting research, and linking research and practice.

The last day of the symposium was started with the “Group Presentations on Problems” and “5-minute Pitches on Collaborative Articles with group” sessions. All the PhD students were given case studies and divided into small groups. They were required to prepare videos to make presentations (for understanding how to use social media to share research messages with people outside the academic world). These sessions aimed at developing participants’ soft skills.



The last session was “Final Exchange with Thought Leader”. **Dr. James Fitzgerald** (UNSW Law School, and Strategy Lead, Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility) shared his experience working in the legal and academic fields, and collaborating with governments and different organisations.

On behalf of the BHRIGHT and the CPLR, **Dr. Shelley Marshall** thanked all PhD students, speakers and commentators for contributing to the symposium.