

A Vision for the Future: Laina Chan on Why Human Lawyers Will Always Be Essential in Legal AI Research

SYDNEY , AUSTRALIA, May 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Xraised.com](https://xraised.com) | [MIAI](https://miai.com)

In a powerful and timely [interview](#) with innovation platform Xraised, renowned barrister and academic Laina Chan shared her insights on the evolving intersection of legal AI research and the enduring value of human intelligence in the legal profession.

This conversation kicks off Part I of the four-part series “A World Without Lawyers: Is Automated Decision-Making the Future?”—and it begins with a bold statement: “Law will always need humans.”

Beyond Automation: Human Strategy at the Core of Legal Research

“AI is a tool—but not a thinker,” Chan explained. While machine learning and AI are revolutionizing the legal research process by accelerating data access and pattern recognition, they cannot replicate the lawyer’s role as a synthesizer of meaning, not just a gatherer of facts. “Lawyers don’t just find information—they know what matters, when it matters, and why it matters,” Chan said. “AI can deliver summaries, but it takes a human to turn those into a strategy.”

Emotional Intelligence, Ethics, and the Human Edge

A key theme in the interview was how emotional intelligence and social perception shape legal outcomes in ways algorithms can’t replicate. Chan emphasized that trust, compassion, and understanding—particularly in emotionally charged cases like family or criminal law—are often the turning points in both litigation and mediation.

“Injustice isn’t just a data point,” Chan noted. “It’s a human experience. And justice isn’t just about speed—it’s about fairness, dignity, and being heard.”

Where Fallibility Becomes Strength

Chan also offered a reframing of human imperfection. Doubt, second-guessing, and emotional

nuance aren't liabilities—they sharpen legal thinking. "We question ourselves not because we're weak—but because we're working hard to get it right," she said.

These nuances, she argues, are precisely what make law resilient, ethical, and relevant in society—a reminder that legal ethics cannot be coded into machine logic.

Legal Education in the Age of AI

When asked how legal education must evolve, Chan pointed to the need for hybrid models that blend AI fluency with deep human judgment. "Law schools need to teach not just doctrine—but how to think, how to strategize, how to lead," she said. "Perhaps we need to bring back more practical training—so future lawyers learn how to work, not just pass exams."

Final Word: The Future Is Hybrid

"Legal AI research is moving fast—but justice will always require the human mind and heart," Chan concluded. As we enter an era defined by digital acceleration, her message is a clear reminder: automation may change how we practice law, but not who delivers justice.

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