



Alumnae Success Stories

Nadia Karim

Class of 2003

Congratulations on starting your new Law Firm, Karim + Nicol Lawyers!

Thank you so much! It is very exciting. Thank you for being interested!

Tell us a little bit about your new firm and the work you will be doing?

After many years spent at Legal Aid and the Aboriginal Legal Service, a colleague and I thought that we could live the dream and continue to work in roles we love, whilst being able to have flexibility and focus on our families. We spent quite a while planning – after which Karim + Nicol Lawyers was born!

Karim + Nicol Lawyers was founded by me and my business partner, Carrie Nicol. It is a criminal law firm based on Sydney's Northern Beaches and the CBD. We represent those charged with all types of criminal offences. We also take on a number of quasi-criminal matters that we are passionate about, such as false imprisonment claims against the police.

Our ambition is to offer a different kind of service from the norm. We aim to provide skilled and passionate advocates who have many years of experience practising in crime and appearing in a court room. We also acknowledge that there is a big gap between those who qualify for Legal Aid and those who can afford a private lawyer - we want to bridge that gap by being affordable and approachable.

Tell us about how you started out and if this was what you thought you would be doing when you left Tara?

When I was little I always proclaimed to want to be a barrister or an actor. So it was perhaps unsurprising that after completing year 12 at Tara I went on to complete a combined Arts/Laws Degree with my Arts major being Performance Drama!

I knew quite early on that I wanted to try to help those less fortunate, so I accepted an internship with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees whilst completing my Masters in International and Human Rights Law at Sydney University. Since then I sought and held positions with the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, the Aboriginal Legal Service and Legal Aid. I have worked all over NSW!

I just loved everything about working for the ALS and Legal Aid. I wavered for a while as to whether I wanted to continue practising as a solicitor or set the Bar exams. There are many similarities between solicitors and barristers. There are also a few differences. Quite early on I decided that my preference was to continue on the trajectory as a solicitor.

Over the years Carrie and I started to put wheels in motion for going out on our own and establishing Karim + Nicol Lawyers. We both wanted to wait until we had children, and wanted to make a point of getting some niche experience under our belts. Once we had those underway we gave it our best crack! So whilst the details might not be 100% identical to what I had thought I would be doing, I always knew I wanted to spend my days in a court room fighting for the under dog.

What or who made you decide to start a business? And what was your original inspiration for doing it?

Flexibility. I knew that it was possible to do what I loved for a living, whilst having the flexibility to dedicate more time to my family. Whilst I have not managed to find that balance just yet, I am positive that in the future that will be attainable. I also wanted to have a more varied criminal practise than what was offered in the Sydney Legal Aid office.



What is the best part of your week?

Waking up every morning to my son's very big smile! And spending weekends with my family in Manly.

How do you balance family and work?

This is something that I am still trying to navigate! I am not sure that there is a hard and fast rule, but in short, I try to do the best I can with the help of my husband. We try to coordinate and prioritise the week together, knowing that each of us has a family and businesses to manage. Things are made easier by having very supportive family members and a work partner in a similar position.

What are the most important traits for a criminal lawyer to have?

Be approachable, non judgmental and willing to listen. Be able to identify and explain complex legal issues in ways that a non lawyers can understand. Be a passionate and resilient advocate. Enjoy reading and talking!

What would be your advice for a Tara girl thinking about becoming a lawyer or starting her own company?

Go for it! Back yourself. Support and encourage the success of others. Get a vast amount experience working as a solicitor so that you are confident in your own ability. Never stop learning, ask questions and make connections. And if you're anything like me...plan, plan, plan!