

Interview with Katherine Sessions

Dr Martyn Taylor, sits down with Katherine Sessions, Senior Investigations and Compliance Officer at the ACMA and Chair of the CAMLA Young Lawyers Committee to discuss the communications and media industry from a young lawyer's perspective.

TAYLOR: What made you decide to become a lawyer? What is your current role?

SESSIONS: It was something that I thought would provide for an interesting career.

In my current position I am working with the ACMA in implementing the recently enacted Online Content Service Provider Rules - restricting gambling advertising during live streamed sport. This picks up a nice mix of my prior experience in the Interactive Gambling Taskforce at the ACMA and knowledge gained whilst working on the Digital Platforms Inquiry with the ACCC. It is an innovative area of the law that can have some exceptional outcomes.

TAYLOR: What is the most exciting thing that you've worked on in the last year and since you were admitted?

SESSIONS: Without doubt the answer to both is working as a secondee to the ACCC's Digital Platforms Inquiry. The interim report is almost out, so I won't go into too much granularity, though the Inquiry is unlike anything the Australian government has undertaken previously. The Inquiry is looking at the effect that digital search engines, social media platforms and other digital content aggregation platforms have on competition in media and advertising markets. In addition to the incredible subject matter, it was such a privilege to work with the Inquiry team.

I've also thoroughly enjoyed my work in the Interactive Gambling Taskforce at the ACMA. It was a great team and the outputs have a broad reach of public good. We received Australia Day Awards for our efforts, which is an accolade that I never thought I would be a recipient of.

Reflecting on these pursuits, I think it's safe to say that I thrive when working in innovative areas, and there are so many areas like this to do with media and communications content.



TAYLOR: What inspired you to get involved with the Young Lawyers' Committee at CAMLA? What are your objectives for the Committee?

SESSIONS: I had been involved with CAMLA for a few years prior to joining the Young Lawyers Committee. I was always drawn to the fantastic events that the CAMLA team puts on for young lawyers looking to work in the communications, media, telecommunications and creative spaces. I had networked, gained MCLEs in relevant areas and I was enthusiastic about getting more involved.

My objective for the Committee is to engage a diverse team and create a forum that encourages younger lawyers to reach out and get involved. For many young lawyers, particularly in house, government and in start-up roles there is a certain degree of isolation. CAMLA provides a vibrant forum for young lawyers to engage with peers across the industry, that may be outside of their day-to-day activities.

TAYLOR: What do you consider to be some of the most interesting and challenging aspects of your role as Chair of the Young Lawyers' Committee at CAMLA?

SESSIONS: Being Chair of the Young Lawyers Committee is a privilege that I certainly don't take for granted. The key challenge of the role is juggling commitments, though I am an organiser at heart and so for me it is pretty amazing! Being Chair also provides me an opportunity to give back, to contribute by organising events and networking activities, to work with a team of amazing young lawyers and build wonderful relationships with the CAMLA Board.

TAYLOR: Looking back on your career and studies, what do you wish you had known about the legal profession before becoming a lawyer?

SESSIONS: I am a creative, and so I wish that I had known that there are plenty of other creative minded lateral thinking lawyers out there! I would encourage law students to engage in electives at university that

inspire you. There are also a lot of opportunities that might not be on the traditional career path that can build your legal skillset. For me, this was gaining experience working with Baker McKenzie in Berlin. As a student I also volunteered, undertook internships and summer clerkships within the media and arts law sectors – the projects included everything from seeking approvals for Australia's first fashion 'flash mob' across Flinders Street to working with the L'Oreal Fashion Festival team. I also spent some time working with the Arts Law Centre of Australia, which provides free or low cost specialised legal advice, education and resources to Australian artists and arts organisations across all art forms, on a wide range of arts related legal and business matters. There are opportunities to gain experience in areas of interest if you explore the sector.

TAYLOR: You've spent some time overseas on an international exchange program. What is your take on gaining international experience as a young lawyer?

SESSIONS: During my studies I undertook a law exchange program in Sweden and later worked in Berlin with Baker McKenzie. Both experiences were incredible and allowed me to gain insights and grow professionally in ways that I most likely wouldn't have otherwise. As an example, I was able to learn about the EU and then later apply that knowledge in practice.

If you are interested in working abroad I would encourage you to look outside the box, seek out opportunities and be willing to be flexible. Seize opportunities - don't wait for them to find you, be persistent.

TAYLOR: What do you work towards in your free time? What advice would you give to newly admitted lawyers about work life balance?

SESSIONS: I am an aficionado for the arts, so you will often find me wandering around a gallery in my free time. In terms of work life balance, it is about finding what works for you, your natural preferences and an activity that you can engage with consistently. Some great advice that I was given once was to simply take

ten minutes for yourself every day – this could be as simple as taking a different route on the walk to work and appreciating the architecture or trying a new coffee place. For me, living and working in Pyrmont is great, though I recharge best when I take the time to go for a walk around the wharves after work.

TAYLOR: How do you think things are different for the current generation of young lawyers than those who were Young Lawyers a decade or two ago?

SESSIONS: Practically, we live in a digital environment. All aspects of our profession are undertaken on device or online with relatively paperless desks. The concept of the law firm or workplace is also rapidly changing - a recent example being Corrs CEO Gavin MacLaren 'dumping' billable hours and adding one week of leave to "create a sense of humanity in a law firm". A bold step, yes, though one which I think has been well received. We are all working to more flexible time frames and in flexible environments. My office is in Sydney, though technology allows me the capability to work from anywhere at any time of day. Despite some current ambivalence in some workplaces, I think it is certainly the way of the future.

TAYLOR: What would you say to the CLB readership about the importance of mentoring Young Lawyers?

SESSIONS: I've been fortunate enough to have some amazing mentors in my time. Shane Simpson is one such mentor, who despite his personal success, has always been so incredibly humble and supportive of my aspirations. I would encourage the CLB readership to take five minutes to check in with younger lawyers and team members. A little advice can go a long way when starting out. I would also advise younger lawyers to also actively seek out advice from those they aspire to be like.

TAYLOR: How do you think the internet and modern technology has influenced the legal profession and the role of lawyers?

SESSIONS: I am a techno-optimist. Without doubt the advancements in technology have created efficiencies and changed legal practice in a multitude of ways. All aspects

of the profession are migrating online - searching case law, court listings, filing documents, Skype calls and drop box. In many ways this technology is also rapidly becoming redundant, if not entirely obsolete, as we engage with an imminent future founded on blockchain and AI technologies. That said, we shouldn't fall into a mindedness of technological determinism, in supposing the future is fixed, though it will be game changing.

TAYLOR: If you could take on the role of a fictional character (movie, TV show or books) who would it be, and why?

SESSIONS: Jo Stockton (Audrey Hepburn's character in *Funny Face*) – I'd love to travel the world dancing with Fred Astaire.

TAYLOR: If you were given a one-minute ad slot during the Super Bowl, what would you fill it with?

SESSIONS: That's a tough one. I'm not sure what I would fill it with. I did see the recent Super Bowl advertisement 'Alexa has lost her voice' which I thought was a very well-done and a good laugh. That said, I'm cognisant that the American accent Alexa can be quite humorous (think Kanye / Kan-ye), though perhaps not as humorous as Rebel Wilson may be if she were indeed the voice of Alexa as in the recent Super Bowl ad – non-stop laughs.



Dr Martyn Taylor is a Partner at Norton Rose Fulbright and President of CAMLA