

Clarissa Amato

Barrister and Member of Banco Chambers

Madeleine James, Associate at Corrs Chambers Westgarth, sits down with **Clarissa Amato**, a barrister and member of Banco Chambers to discuss International Women's Day.

Clarissa has been in practice at the Bar since 2008 and practises in commercial litigation, defamation, intellectual property and media law. Most recently, Clarissa was briefed to appear for the ABC in defence of a defamation claim brought by the Commonwealth Attorney General, Christian Porter, arising from reporting of a historical sexual assault allegation.

Clarissa's experience and expertise are widely acknowledged. She is recommended in Doyles Guide to the Legal Profession for media, technology, and communications matters. She is also ranked in the World Trademark Review as one of Australia's leading trademark Counsel, which describes her as "a commercial, defamation, IP and media litigator with an excellent record."

In addition to her media and entertainment matters, Clarissa also maintains a diverse commercial practice encompassing contract disputes, cross-border insolvency matters and consumer law claims.

MADELEINE JAMES: What does a typical day look like for you?

CLARISSA AMATO: I tend to get up around 5.30am and do some form of exercise (fuelled by coffee), then come into chambers. I have a quick breakfast while I catch up on the news. Then it is either Court or if not, then reading, preparation or conferences. I do my best thinking in the morning so I try to tackle anything tricky then. Lunch is usually at the communal bench in chambers with colleagues. It is always hilarious and gives me the energy to push on through the afternoon slump (or the afternoon session of Court). Home time depends on workload but I do try to get there for family dinner or at least stories with the kids as often as possible.

JAMES: Did you always want this job? If so, what did you do to position yourself to get it? If not, how did your career path lead you here?

AMATO: Sheepishly, I confess I wanted to do this job since I was very young. I grew up in a small coastal town (think Porpoise Spit) in an academic family but with zero connections in the law. I have no idea how I got the idea in my head that becoming a barrister would be a good idea – maybe it was a

way to escape to the big smoke. Anyway, after a standard Arts/Law degree at Sydney University, I worked as a solicitor at Phillips Fox, then a boutique media firm (Schillings) in London before coming to the Bar.

JAMES: What's the best work-related advice you've ever received?

AMATO: Read the brief. Read every single page in the brief, even the boring bits. Facts win cases.

JAMES: What developments do you see on the horizon in 2021 for the communications and media legal landscape?

AMATO: Perhaps the amendments to the *Defamation Act* will actually commence.

JAMES: The 2021 International Women's Day campaign theme is #ChooseToChallenge. What does this mean to you and how would you suggest this is implemented in our readers' work and personal lives?

AMATO: To me, it means challenging views or habits that are not serving you well and implementing a sustainable solution. That challenge



may be a work habit, a way of relating to others or a lifestyle habit. For me, it was learning to ask for help and advice rather than feeling like I had to do it all on my own. I also took up ocean swimming a couple of years ago which has brought great joy.

JAMES: Who is one woman in the industry whom you really admire, and why?

AMATO: I have the great privilege to be in chambers with a group of brilliant, accomplished, insightful and funny women that I cannot pick just one (nor will I embarrass them by naming them). They know who they are.

JAMES: What advice would you give to the next generation of female leaders in the industry?

AMATO: Read the brief (or the file), get enough sleep, exercise and be assertive.