

Samantha Walker

Legal Counsel for NOVA Entertainment

Justin Kardi, Lawyer at Clayton Utz, speaks with **Samantha Walker**, Legal Counsel for NOVA Entertainment about Samantha's career in media law and International Women's Day.

JUSTIN KARDI: Could you explain your role and what a typical day looks like for you?

SAMANTHA WALKER: As Legal Counsel for NOVA Entertainment, I'm part of a close-knit team of three lawyers supporting and advising the business nationally. A typical day requires me to be flexible and responsive, to prioritise my workload and time in order to meet urgent and often last-minute deadlines, while at the same time keeping on top of business-as-usual workstreams. A typical day usually involves reviewing and negotiating a few different types of agreements (these could be in relation to tech and digital services, sponsorships and events, IP and podcast licences, contractor and talent engagements or advertising campaigns); advising on various topics such as compliance with advertising and consumer laws, intellectual property and brand protection matters, privacy and data protection issues, pre-publication issues including defamation and contempt; keeping myself across and advising on changes to legislation and regulatory issues affecting the industry; and attending meetings with various stakeholders. Every day is jam-packed, different and interesting.

KARDI: Can you tell us about one experience, event or person who was instrumental in sparking your interest in communications and media law or in leading you to your current role?

WALKER: In my final years of University I was fortunate enough to land a Paralegal position at NOVA. This exposure to practical, hands-on experience in a media company early on in my career gave me invaluable insight into what it would be like to work as in-house counsel for a media company, and I was hooked. After graduating I worked in private practice for a few years – this was great for developing my technical legal skills, and I met and learned from some amazing people many of whom are now close friends, but it was always my goal to end up working in-house. I love that I can put my skill set to use as a lawyer while working in such an exciting and

creative environment, for a company where I genuinely feel passionate about the product. My experience working as a Paralegal at NOVA definitely sparked my interest in this regard and I've come full circle with my current role as Legal Counsel at NOVA.

KARDI: Are there any law reforms in your sector that you think are desperately needed? If so, what are they?

WALKER: I think there are many laws in need of reform as they struggle to keep up with the pace of digital transformation. In my current role, one example of where this is particularly evident is advertising laws that are piecemeal between different products within an industry, different advertising mediums (print, broadcast, online, streaming etc) and with differing approaches amongst Australian states/territories. Take for instance gambling advertising laws, the laws differ between Australian states/territories which is not such a problem for more traditional forms of advertising such as print and broadcast, but does become problematic when the internet makes advertising content available in a location where certain things contained in an ad might be prohibited. It would be great to see a uniform national law covering all states/territories, all different types of products, and different advertising mediums – similarly to what the Therapeutic Goods Administration has done for therapeutic goods advertising laws for example. Also – on the topic of the internet and digital transformation, I am obviously very interested (along with the majority of Australia I'm sure) to see how implementation of the News Media Bargaining Code pans out, particularly given Australia is essentially running a test race for the rest of the world.

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

WALKER: I've been privileged to have worked alongside a number of highly intelligent, accomplished



and inspiring women (and men) in my career to date - lawyers I worked with in private practice, my past and present colleagues at NOVA, and others I have met and worked with along the way. Cathy O'Connor (NOVA's former CEO, now the MD & CEO of oOh!) is definitely someone I admire and look up to – highly respected by all who know and work for and with her, a strong and inspiring leader and so clearly passionate about what she does.

KARDI: If there is one thing you would celebrate about the legal industry on International Women's Day, what would it be?

WALKER: The legal industry has the capacity to facilitate instrumental and necessary change in society and our ways of thinking. The fact that we can advocate for, and work to change our laws to reflect growth and changing ways of thinking about the world is a pretty amazing thing. Take for instance Grace Tame and Nina Funnell's #LetHerSpeak campaign. I am proud to work in an industry that facilitates reflection and enables change for the better – of course this is not only limited to issues affecting women, but on International Women's Day these are the issues I am reflecting on, and in relation to which I am celebrating forward momentum and change.