

Rebecca McCloy

Director of Acquisitions and Sports Partnerships at Fox Sports

Tara-Kate Taylor, Paralegal at McCullough Robertson Lawyers, speaks with **Rebecca McCloy**, Director of Acquisitions and Sports Partnerships at Fox Sports, about Rebecca's career and International Women's Day.

TARA-KATE TAYLOR: Hi Rebecca, thank you for taking the time to talk with me about your career and experiences in the Australian media industry. On behalf of CAMLA readers, I'm very grateful for your insights! To celebrate International Women's Day, CAMLA is publishing a spotlight edition on successful and talented women in the media and communications space. To start off with, could you tell us about your role as the Director of Acquisitions and Sport Partnerships at Fox Sports? What is a 'typical day' for you and what are some interesting partnerships/projects you and your team have recently been involved in?

REBECCA MCCLOY: I have been at Fox Sports for almost nine years and as the Director of Acquisitions and Sport Partnerships I oversee the strategy, negotiation and acquisition of sports media rights and sports channels for the Foxtel Group, which includes Kayo. A typical day for my team can involve negotiating commercial deals to acquire multi-year media rights for mainstream sports like AFL, NRL and Cricket through to documentaries and post produced programming for niche sports like dragon boat racing, ultimate frisbee and fencing. Most of my time is spent managing the ongoing relationships with our hundreds of sports partners and agencies around the world. My team has a particular passion for driving the rise of women's sports in Australia and recently we signed a 5-year agreement with Netball Australia and have launched a month-long pop-up channel FOXW, in April, to showcase women's sports and inspiring female athletes and personalities. Increasing the presence of females on our television screens, both as athletes and on-air roles, is an important and rewarding part of my job.



TAYLOR: I understand you previously worked as the Business Manager of Sport at Network Ten and prior to that as the Business Director of the Stadium. What drew you to specialise in sports media and how have you navigated what is a largely male dominated field?

MCCLOY: It was my passion for sport that drove me to media. I started in financial services while

studying business and law. I had taken a sports management elective for fun, and my university lecturer suggested I would be well-suited to a commercial role in sports and specifically negotiating sports rights. It was something I had never considered but when the role at Network Ten came up I jumped at the opportunity and never looked back.

It is a very niche role, and the sports rights market is quite small globally. Fifteen years ago 95% of my colleagues would have been male. It is still incredibly male dominated, and I am the first woman to have my role in our company, but I have been fortunate to be supported by my male and female colleagues on the path. My gender has certainly made the journey more challenging but ultimately my style has been successful, and my performance has been recognised. I think I probably spent the first 7 years of my career trying not to highlight the fact that I was a woman, and the last 10 celebrating it, and realising that some of the more stereotypical female traits I possess such as empathy, compassion and the ability to seriously multi-task have contributed to my success.

TAYLOR: Have your experiences in a male dominated industry shaped the professional you are today? If so, how?

MCCLOY: Yes, absolutely. I am a huge advocate for diversity, particularly in the decision-making roles of our organisations. My experiences have really reinforced the need for us to have more women in these critical roles. I often bring a completely different perspective to a discussion. I have strong views and am confident in presenting a dissenting opinion, but this should be the norm not the exception. Things have improved in this area, particularly over the last 5 years, but sport and media still have a long way to go.

TAYLOR: Over the past couple of years, there has been a growing appetite for female sport on TV. This is evidenced by the reinvigoration of AFLW, NRLW and Super Netball Competitions, as well as the increase in funding provided by the Federal Government to support the coverage of female sports. Where do you think women's professional sport on TV is headed from here?

MCCLOY: Women's professional sports are on a fantastic trajectory. This is a cycle that needed to be started. If we have more women

playing sports, this then increases the quality of the competition, which increases the interest in watching, which increases the commercial interest from sponsors and broadcasters, which increases the money that can be poured back into female athletes, which increases the professionalism etc. You get the picture. There has been so much debate about how to kickstart the cycle and a lot of the investments we have made at Fox Sports were premised on what female sports could become and how we could help kickstart the cycle. The cycle is underway, and we are only going to see it increase more in the coming years. For this to be sustainable, we need sponsors to really get behind the women, both their sports and as individual athletes, and invest for the potential they see in the coming years, not just the eyeballs they are attracting today.

TAYLOR: Having worked in the media industry for the past 15 years, what has been the biggest change to the media landscape you have observed? What do you think is on the horizon for Australian sports media in the next few years?

MCCLOY: The way people consume their media has changed dramatically. The number of places you can watch your sport today is extraordinary compared to 15 years ago. It was a lot simpler to do my job 15 years ago! The emergence of so many different digital products, most of them being free paying, is still increasing. However, I think there will be a point of consolidation in the coming years as consumers will not be willing to pay for multiple subscriptions from different providers. Further, the cost of sports rights is not sustainable, and can be a major challenge for many new entrants.

In terms of women, I expect to see more women on our screens presenting sport and playing sport. It's an exciting time for my daughters who will be able to see so many opportunities in sport and media for young women.

TAYLOR: What advice would you give to those looking to embark (or switch into) a career in the sports media space?

MCCLOY: Be comfortable with change because this industry is changing quickly!

TAYLOR: International Women's Day is all about celebrating the progress of women's achievements and forging a gender equal world – the theme this year is #ChoosetoChallenge. Are there any champions of gender equality or particular women that inspire you?

MCCLOY: Elizabeth Broderick is incredibly impressive in the way she champions gender equality in Australia. I have been particularly inspired by Ruth-Bader Ginsberg and often wear her "dissent collar earrings". I am also greatly inspired by Jaha Dukureh, Founder of Safe Hands for Girls, and Winnie Byanyima of Oxfam. I could list 100s!

TAYLOR: On behalf of CAMLA, thank you again for taking the time to discuss your experiences and for providing some helpful tips and insights.