

# Sophie Dawson

## Partner at Bird & Bird

**Isabella Boag-Taylor**, lawyer at Mills Oakley, sits down with **Sophie Dawson**, Partner at Bird & Bird to discuss Sophie's career and her thoughts on International Women's Day. Sophie is a TMT partner at Bird & Bird. Sophie has more than 25 years' experience as a media and technology lawyer, and leads Bird & Bird's Sydney Disputes practice.

**ISABELLA BOAG-TAYLOR:** What energises you about work?

**SOPHIE DAWSON:** I love working with our team to produce results for our clients. The teamwork both within Bird & Bird and externally with our instructors is for me the best bit. Joint problem solving is a source of genuine delight.

**BOAG-TAYLOR:** What's the best work-related advice you've ever received?

**DAWSON:** "Stick to your knitting!" A previous partner used to always say that when you wonder what to do next, the answer is nearly always to "stick to your knitting". That is, continue to focus on learning, teaching, growing and doing a good job for your clients. And the rest looks after itself.

**BOAG-TAYLOR:** What developments do you see on the horizon in 2021 for the communications and media legal landscape?

**DAWSON:** 2021 is set to be a landmark year in this space. Globally, there is a ground shift towards greater regulation of the internet and support for journalism. Here, that is reflected not only in the privacy, online and defamation law reform processes underway but also in the Treasury Laws Amendment (News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code) Act 2021, passed on 25 February 2021, and assented to on 2 March 2021. Similarly extensive changes are happening in Europe with the Digital Services Act reforms.

**BOAG-TAYLOR:** 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?



**DAWSON:** This is a fantastic theme and one which we can all bring to our day to day work. It highlights the role that each of us individually has to play in making the world a better, safer place for women. We need to call out bad behaviour whenever it occurs. In many cases the people doing it don't even realise there's a problem with what they are doing, so actually calling it out is also a favour to them.

**BOAG-TAYLOR:** If you could have dinner with any woman – living or passed, real or fictional, who would it be and why?

**DAWSON:** Probably Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who led by example a generation of women (particularly in law) around the world. Closer to home, it is always a pleasure to run into Liz Broderick who has done a great job of leading efforts to bring equality to the Australian legal community, and more recently internationally. She had a role in

supporting me towards partnership when I was a young lawyer at Blake Dawson (as it then was).

**BOAG-TAYLOR:** What advice would you give to the next generation of female leaders in the industry?

**DAWSON:** Keep it real. Choose to Challenge, and also remember that both legal practice and family life will inevitably give rise to both joy and unexpected challenges. Be kind to yourself and others as you and they rise to meet those challenges. Bird & Bird have a really nice video series as part of this year's IWD material in which women talk about those challenges, and how they sometimes find it difficult. I think it is great that the profession is having an honest and supportive discussion about that.

Also be confident, and don't be afraid to pursue whatever it is that you would like to achieve in your career. You can do it!