

Anna Spies

Barrister at 5 Wentworth Chambers

Anna Spies is a barrister at 5 Wentworth Chambers. She was called to the bar in 2016 and has a particular focus on intellectual property law. Her practice also includes media, consumer law, investigations and inquiries. Before coming to the bar, Anna was a Senior Associate in the King & Wood Mallesons intellectual property litigation team. Anna has been repeatedly listed as a recommended junior counsel for Intellectual Property in NSW in Doyle's Guide. She sits down with Claire Roberts, barrister at Eleven Wentworth to discuss her career and International Women's Day.

CLAIRE ROBERTS: 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?

ANNA SPIES: Not at all. Putting to one side my ambitions as a small child to one side (to be a painter/vet/writer/palaentologist all at once), I studied law due to my love of words, language, analysis and crafting arguments. At University, I initially combined my law degree with international studies and thought that I wanted to be a diplomat. I soon discovered this was not the case and instead, I really enjoyed my law subjects. From early in my legal career, I knew that I wanted to work in intellectual property law. I worked as a solicitor in intellectual property dispute resolution at King & Wood Mallesons, including on s 115A website blocking injunctions and *NRL v Optus*. I also worked as an Associate to the Hon Annabelle Bennett AC SC at the Federal Court, including on cases such as *Apple v Samsung*.

I did not see myself as a barrister until Justice Bennett encouraged me to consider the bar. After I indicated that I did not see myself as a 'public speaker', she gave me the best piece of advice that I have received: Court is a conversation between you and the judge, and advocacy is being persuasive in that conversation. After my associateship, I went back to work as a solicitor for a few years. Realising that the part of the job that I loved the most was writing submissions, researching the law, devising arguments and being in Court. This being the heart of the work of a barrister, and encouraged by mentors, I decided to go to the bar.

CLAIRE: How do you structure your workdays? Do you have a usual routine you try to follow?

ANNA: I am usually woken in the morning by one of two little boys. Once we make our way through the morning routine and I start work, my typical day is variable. It largely depends on whether I have a day in Court or a day doing 'chambers' work. A day in Court will involve preparing and reviewing material and arguments early in the morning, then meeting my leader (if I

have one) and instructing solicitors before Court, attending Court, and in the case of a longer trial, I will spend the evening dissecting the evidence from that day and preparing for the next. On the other hand, if I have a day of chambers work, my day is usually more flexible. I may work from my office or work from home. This may involve phone calls and conferences with my instructing solicitors, the client or witnesses, emails, reviewing and settling evidence, preparing written advices, pleadings or other court documents.

CLAIRE: Is there any advice you would love to have received earlier in your career?

ANNA: Do not be afraid to try new things and to put your hand up to do something that is outside of your comfort zone - that is how you will grow and learn. You are capable of doing more than you realise, and trust your abilities. It is a marathon, not a sprint, so do not forget to make time for your family, your friends and your own health and wellbeing.

CLAIRE: How do you unplug from work?

ANNA: My main way to unplug is by spending time with my husband and my two little boys, our extended family and friends. We frequent playgrounds and parks and the zoo, and love to spend as much time as we can outdoors. I also like to tune out by cooking a meal and watching stress-free (and sometimes terrible) TV.

CLAIRE: The 2022 International Women's Day campaign theme is #BreakTheBias. What does this mean to you and how would you suggest this is implemented in our readers' work and personal lives?

ANNA: This is a great theme, and an important one. To me, it emphasises taking steps to address biases and stereotypes, not just identifying them. We need to think about how biases and inequality exist in our own lives and workplaces, whether conscious or subconscious. We should call out bias and challenge stereotypes where we see them. Women should feel brave and supported to express opinions, celebrate our achievements and try new roles with confidence and without imposter



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syndrome. The support of colleagues and friends is crucial, and we therefore need to be that supportive colleague or friend to others.

CLAIRE: Who is one woman in the industry (or if that is too hard, examples of a few women!) whom you really admire, and why?

ANNA: The woman that I most admire is the Hon Annabelle Bennett AC SC, who I had the privilege of working for as an Associate. It goes without saying that she is a brilliant lawyer with a fierce intellect, who is known for her significant contribution to the Federal Court and to Australian and international intellectual property law. She has also had a myriad of other roles, which reflect her diverse interests and which she seems to manage with boundless energy. These range from the Court of Arbitration for Sport and Chancellor at Bond University, to the board of the Garvan Institute and a Commissioner on the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. Most of all, I admire the way in which she has managed the balance between her career and her very close relationships with her family.

CLAIRE: Thanks so much for your insights Anna, it was a pleasure speaking with you.

ANNA: Thank you Claire.