

Miriam Stiel

Partner and Leader of the Allens' IP Practice

Millicent Weaver, Summer Clerk at Thomson Geer, chats with **Miriam Stiel**, Partner and Leader of the Allens' Intellectual Property, Patents & Trade Marks Attorney group, about Miriam's incredible career and her thoughts about 2022 International Women's Day. Miriam has over 20 years' experience as an intellectual property lawyer and works with Australian and multi-national corporations across media and entertainment, fashion, manufacturing, banking and finance, sport and technology to develop strategies for the protection, commercialisation and enforcement of their IP rights. Miriam provides strategic brand protection and advertising advice, and handles the trade mark portfolios for some of Australia's and the world's most recognisable brands. She is also a highly regarded litigator. Miriam is a member of the Intellectual Property Committee of the Business Law Section of the Law Council of Australia, the Enforcement Committee of the International Trademark Association and the AI & New Emerging Technologies and Women in IP committees of the Intellectual Property Owners Association. It comes as no surprise that Miriam's international reputation sees her recognised as a leading IP lawyer by a range of directories including *Chambers Asia-Pacific* and *Legal 500* and as one of the global Top 250 in IP by *Managing IP*.



MILLICENT WEAVER: Miriam, thank you so much for taking the time to chat with me about your career and thoughts on the 2022 International Women's Day for CAMLA. From my perspective as a law student, your career, accomplishments and accolades are truly inspiring. You've really established yourself in commercial practice, and currently lead the IP group at Allens. Tell me about your job, and what a typical day looks like for you?

MIRIAM STIEL: I'm a partner in the IP group at Allens. My work day generally starts at 9am but with 3 teenagers at home, I often feel like I have already done a full day of work as a chauffeur, chef and project manager before my real job starts! I don't really have a typical work day – in any given day, I might be attending a court hearing or mediation; negotiating an agreement; drafting an advice or evidence; meeting with a client; or all of the above – as well as attending internal meetings in my role as Practice Leader and participating in various professional organisations. Working from home over the past couple of years has meant spending most of my day in front of a screen - I am really looking forward to being back in the office and travelling again, and generally having more "in real life" interactions.

MILLICENT: Did you always want to work in IP? How did you end up working in this area?

MIRIAM: Growing up, I wanted to be a doctor or an actor, but over time I came to realise that I didn't have any acting ability and can't stand the sight of blood, so I decided to follow in my sister's footsteps and study law. I did a clerkship at Allens and worked here as a paralegal in my final year of uni, which was when I decided that I wanted to be an IP lawyer – they seemed to have the most fun! I expressed my interest in the area to one of the IP partners, who brought me onto one of his matters, and it took off from there. Over

20 years later, I am still having fun and feel very fortunate to have landed in a role that I find so rewarding.

MILLICENT: What's the greatest risk you've taken as a professional?

MIRIAM: Looking back at it, going through the partner promotion process while I was on maternity leave – with 2 children under the age of 2 – was pretty risky! I was incredibly fortunate to have 2 partners in particular who were great mentors and sponsors, and gave me the confidence to go for it. They also supported me in my early years as a partner which made the transition far less daunting than it could have been.

MILLICENT: What developments or reforms do you see occurring in 2022 for the communications and media legal landscape? What developments or reforms do you think are needed in this industry?

MIRIAM: I will be following with interest the review of the News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code which was announced this week, and the progress of the Social Media (Anti-Trolling) Bill. While I am not sure that the Bill achieves its intended purpose of combatting online trolls, I do think that reform is needed to clarify the liability of digital platforms for a range of unlawful conduct, including copyright and trade mark infringement, as well as defamation.

MILLICENT: 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?

MIRIAM: This theme really resonates to me - we can't have a truly inclusive and diverse profession unless everyone feels respected and valued, all people are given

an opportunity to actively engage and contribute, and there is equitable access to resources and opportunities. I think we all need to have the courage to call out bad behaviour when we see it – whether in the workplace or elsewhere – and question our own biases and assumptions that may cause us to make decisions which undermine our desire to promote equality.

MILLICENT: If there is one thing you would celebrate about International Women's Day in this industry, specifically, what would it be?

MIRIAM: Since I joined the profession, the number of female partners in law firms has grown steadily, which is a cause for celebration – with the AFR reporting in December that women now comprise 31% of partners at the 49 largest firms in Australia, and at Allens we are well on the way to achieving our goal of at least 35% of female partners by 2022 - but there is still more work to be done to support the success of women in the legal profession and achieve greater representation of women in leadership positions.

MILLICENT: What advice would you give to the next generation of female leaders in the industry, or who want to get into your industry?

MIRIAM: I would encourage all aspiring female leaders to focus on building genuine and strong relationships throughout their career with people who will help them achieve their goals and support them in their journey. Having at least one person in your professional network whom you trust completely and who understands your strengths and vulnerabilities is critical.

MILLICENT: Miriam, thank you again for taking the time to chat with me. Happy International Women's Day!