

Calli Tsipidis

Legal Counsel, Foxtel

Rachel Liang, Associate, MinterEllison, sits down with **Calli Tsipidis**, Legal Counsel, Foxtel Group, to discuss her thoughts on International Women's Day. Calli is the Chair of the CAMLA Young Lawyers Committee and in 2021, was the winner of the 'Rising Star of the Year (In-House)' and 'In-House Lawyer of the Year' awards at the Lawyers Weekly Women in Law Awards.

RACHEL LIANG: You started your career in private practice. What made you want to move in-house and work in the sports industry?

CALLI TSIPIDIS: As a lifelong sports fanatic, I knew that sport was a direction I wanted to steer my career towards, however it wasn't until partway through my university studies that I truly understood what a 'sports lawyer' was, and how I could work in this type of role. I completed a Sports Law elective course during my fourth year, where our fantastic lecturer invited sports lawyers to join our classes and give us insights about their role and career trajectory – it opened my eyes to a world of possibilities!

I was very enthusiastic about the prospect of working in an area that I was personally passionate about, and already consumed so much of my time, watching and playing hours of sport every week. After many months of applying for various legal and administrative roles across the sports industry, I secured a 6 month legal and regulatory internship at Football Australia (then known as Football Federation Australia). This was a wonderful glimpse of working as a lawyer in a corporate sporting environment. A key takeaway for me was that every day brought new and different challenges and opportunities, shaped by the business units the legal team supported. I loved the buzz and excitement, and importantly I loved the end product.

Only a few short months after my internship had ended, a junior legal counsel role opened up at FOX SPORTS Australia and the rest is history!

RACHEL: Did you come across any barriers to entering the sports industry as a young female lawyer? If so, how did you overcome them?

CALLI: I am very fortunate to work for an organisation that truly encourages females to grow their careers in the sports media industry – through specialist graduate programs for women, investment in women's sports and internal programs such as 'Fox Squad' which provides employees with opportunities to network, develop and be inspired by fellow colleagues and leaders.

Practically speaking, the main barrier for me was the market itself, which anyone who is seeking work in sports and media will appreciate. When I first started looking for a job in sports and sports media, I realised there were actually very few that existed, let alone any that were available to juniors! I know that I am very fortunate to have held a couple of roles in the industry already, so my advice as to how to 'overcome' the barrier is:

1. be persistent – check for job opportunities regularly. As the industry grows, more opportunities are becoming available so don't be discouraged if there isn't anything available right when you want it;
2. be open minded – there are some wonderful roles that are not necessarily 'legal' and can help you get your foot in the door, or there may be opportunities that are not necessarily paid (e.g., internships). If you're passionate about the industry, why not give it a go! You have everything to gain from taking the chance; and
3. connect with people – don't be afraid to reach out on LinkedIn, or introduce yourself at a networking event, or even offer to buy someone a cup of coffee to pick their brain on their career path and tips.

RACHEL: What progress have you seen on gender equality in your life and work?

CALLI: I am very fortunate to be surrounded by strong and talented female leaders in my professional life, in my extra-curricular activities and in my personal life, each of whom inspire me to strive for greatness and follow my passions. Generally speaking, I do think we have seen some encouraging signs over the past few years – with greater representation of women in the corporate world, sports and politics. However, I know this is not the norm.

Whilst we have made progress, true gender equality requires a continued investment in all aspects of equity, inclusivity and diversity and it is not a quick fix. We need to foster a culture that truly appreciates the benefits of diversity, where women feel comfortable bringing their unique ideas, perspectives, and experiences to the table – and are respected for doing so by all of their peers. To achieve this, we need to empower everyone to be part of the solution in order to get to a place where we do not need a specific day to 'remember to celebrate' women, but that such celebration, encouragement and investment is embedded into our everyday lives. It will take time, but I do think we are getting there!

RACHEL: How important is the role of a mentor to young female lawyers?

CALLI: I think mentors play such a vital role in helping guide and direct their mentees by drawing from their own experiences – but also are key in offering support, advice and acting as a sounding board for mentees. Young women often face challenges in the workplace and life that aren't easy to navigate, so having a trusted advisor who you



can confide in, seek support and unbiased advice from, is crucial in helping overcome challenges, providing encouragement and stimulating growth in their mentees.

It can seem daunting and perhaps a big commitment but the beauty of mentorship is that it does not have to be structured or formal, it can be as simple as a casual conversation or two – and it provides wonderful benefits to both the mentee *and* the mentor!

RACHEL: What is the best work-related advice you've ever received and what advice would you give to the next generation of female leaders in the industry?

CALLI: Be bold and brave. Say yes to opportunities even if they take you out of your comfort zone, introduce yourself to that someone whose path you aspire to follow, go to that networking event, put your hand up to work on a project, ask for feedback and take it in your stride. Ultimately, do not be afraid of the unfamiliar because it can lead you to so many wonderful places, it can allow you to meet wonderful people and achieve things you never thought possible and it can show you where your passions truly lie. All it takes is you being brave enough to take the first step.

RACHEL: Lastly, if you could have dinner with any woman – living or passed, real or fictional, who would it be and why?

CALLI: Getting sentimental here, I am so lucky to have had incredible women inspiring me from a very young age, and shaping me into the woman I am today. So, it comes as no surprise that my dream dinner would be with my beautiful grandmothers who both sadly passed in 2020. In particular, my grandmother Poppy who was my biggest supporter – the first person to call me when my school reports arrived, front row at every school award ceremony, and always encouraging me to work hard, reminding me that I could achieve anything I set my mind to.

I would love the chance to share my recent successes with my grandmothers, just to see their smiles and hear their reactions would be everything to me. I would want them to know my accomplishments are a testament to the wonderful things they taught me and instilled in me!