

Lauren Pelser

Senior Legal & Business Affairs Manager, Warner Music Australia

Lauren Pelser, Senior Legal & Business Affairs Manager at Warner Music Australia, chats with **Kathy Janevska**, Legal Counsel at Canva, about her career, developments in the entertainment sector and celebrating International Women's Day. Lauren's passion for entertainment has led her on an exciting path including roles at NOVA Entertainment, Chugg Entertainment, Insanity Group in the UK and Future Classic.

KATHY JANEVSKA: Thanks for the opportunity to chat today, Lauren. After starting your career as a paralegal at Warner Music Australia, you've worked at some other really exciting companies in the entertainment industry and have recently made your way back to Warner. Have you always wanted to work in entertainment? If so, what did you do to position yourself to get where you are now?

LAUREN PELSER: Lovely to chat to you and delighted to be part of the issue.

Yes, I've been very fortunate to have worked with some truly incredible teams, artists and people over the years. It has been a lot of hard work, but I still have to pinch myself sometimes.

I actually wanted to be a marine biologist for most of my childhood. I somehow grew out of that and decided that something music-related might be fun.

I've always been captivated by music, and I've made so many great friends and memories around music. My mother always said to me, *"do something you love, and you'll never work a day in your life"*. I was also really grateful that my parents taught me to make my own decisions – they didn't mind what I did as long as I gave it my all each and every day. With that foundation, I was able to figure out exactly what I was passionate about, and what I wanted to do. I love problem solving and always wanted a role where I could use those analytical skills for a purpose that I was deeply passionate about. I strive to always go that step further to ensure I'm delivering my best work.

Once I knew there was a whole team behind an artist (thank goodness as the world does not want to hear me sing!), I really focused on building a career and committing to be a lifelong student.

I thought the best way to do this is to get experience within a variety of companies

so I could have a holistic approach to negotiating deals. When you know what matters most to each party, it saves a lot of time going back and forth. I did this by ensuring that I had diverse experience working across a variety of sectors. Being able to draw on varied experience from different sources, allows you to differentiate yourself and see things that others may not always see.

I also always knew I wanted to spend some time living and working overseas. It happened a little sooner than I expected, and I was fortunate to spend some time in London. Working in another jurisdiction was an incredibly invaluable experience and I was so appreciative of that experience and the ability to develop a global perspective. I worked on everything from putting on a show at the Royal Albert Hall to building a D2C skincare line and developing an online fitness platform. The skills I learnt and contacts I made during that time really serve me to this day.

KATHY: What does a typical day look like for you?

LAUREN: It's very cliché but no two days are the same and that's one thing that I love most about my role – it is very fast paced, and I love having to think fast on my feet, problem solve and tackle new and interesting challenges to find pragmatic and creative solutions.

As I'm usually out most nights either at a concert, catching up with friends, or attending an art show, I like to ensure that my mornings are quite structured so I can best set myself up for the day. I wake up at 5:30am most mornings, go for a walk listen to a podcast and read any key developments within the industry. I'll then put on a playlist and get ready for work.

Once I get to the office, I dive right in. My role is one of the few that sits across the entire company, working directly with all members of our team so being able to effectively manage competing priorities



and responding to last minute matters whilst still staying on top of my day-to-day workflow is paramount.

I will take care of our business-as-usual transactional work as well as working on bespoke projects.

In addition, I work closely with our A&R team on new signings and delivering their projects. I'll also work closely with our marketing team on various campaigns and activations. We have some incredibly creative minds in our team, and I always want to encourage their creativity as I love seeing forward thinking innovative ideas. My key role in this process is finding solutions that meet their objectives whilst mitigating any risks to the business and ensuring we're meeting our overall goals.

I'll also work closely with our executive team on company policy and business strategy.

We have a powerhouse brands and sync team who do an incredible job of placing music in various productions and procuring various brand deals. I'll work closing with them to ensure we're getting the best deal and that we're covered in the (very rare) event something goes wrong.

We also have some incredible JV partners that I'll work with on ensuring that we're finding the best talent and they are being supported in the best way.

Once the workday is done, I'll usually pop off somewhere around the city for an event or catch up with some friends for drinks/dinner.

KATHY: What recent events in the Australian IP or technology law landscape most affect your role?

LAUREN: At its core our business is a creative company with a key focus on intellectual property, so protecting this and the creative output of our artists and team is a key priority for me and something I'm deeply passionate about.

There are a number of key developments impacting the IP and technology law landscape, both in Australia and internationally. We've recently seen the next wave of key technology advancements reach the mainstream via Web3 and AI-generated works. I think we will continue see the technological landscape evolve and the law try to keep up with it, particularly in relation to IP protection as we see greater investment in the space and greater adoption from consumers.

KATHY: Are there any law reforms in the creative sector that you think are desperately needed?

LAUREN: Something that will impact the creative sector, and all sectors more broadly is long-awaited privacy reform. The Australian privacy framework is far behind other jurisdictions.

KATHY: What energises you about work?

LAUREN: I love seeing our artists evolve and touch the lives of so many people in deeply meaningful and impactful ways.

When I'm at a show, I always take a moment to look around and take everything in – for that time period regardless of what everyone was dealing with when they walked in the door, they are all united by the shared experience as an incredible artist shares their passion and heart with the room.

Having worked in touring, management and for labels (both majors and independent), I know how much passion and dedication each person involved in the process puts in and seeing our artists shine as well as the joy on the crowd's faces, you quickly forget the late nights and intense negotiations and are reminding yourself how lucky you are to be a very small part in making it happen. Being able to share the experience with my colleagues makes it even more impactful.

Professionally, I also love that our industry is usually at the forefront of changes. I love that I get to use my analytical skills to tackle new and interesting challenges whilst having an active role in shaping the future of the industry.

KATHY: How do you unplug from work? I wonder if it involves music.

LAUREN: I'm very lucky to have an incredibly supportive partner. We both have roles that can be stressful at times, but we really focus on creating a home filled with love and laughter. No matter what is happening, I know that I always have that to go home to.

Living in central London gave me a newfound appreciation for the incredible natural environment we are so lucky to be surrounded by in Australia. When I'm feeling stressed, I always like to go for a walk or pop to the beach to put things into perspective and reset.

I would be remiss to not mention the important role music plays in me being able to unplug – I'm lucky to have friends who are interested in a wide range of music so we're always sharing new music and playlists. If I need a moment, I'll put on my headphones and get lost for a little bit before jumping back into the world.

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

LAUREN: It's no secret that the entertainment industry has had its challenges with diversity in senior positions. What I would celebrate about International Women's Day in the entertainment industry are all the incredible women I consider my peers and close friends. We're all extremely supportive of each other and I think our generation are going to do some amazing things for the industry. There remains underrepresentation across the industry, so I'd like to see us build on our positions to foster greater diversity across the industry.

KATHY: What advice would you give to the next generation of female leaders in the entertainment industry?

LAUREN: I have a few pieces of advice:

Be yourself

Be enthusiastic and be creative, there is only one of you so embrace that and be yourself.

You have to put in the work

There are no shortcuts, you need to put in your 10,000 hours and really hone your craft (whatever that may be). Roles are few and far between and it's a highly competitive industry.

Bloom where you're planted

There will be times when you're working on something that you would rather not be working on. However, I've found that you should always embrace what's on your plate and give it your all. It shows that you're a good team player and it may even be useful down the line! I've had a few instances where having done so called "boring" tasks actually helped inform something else I did a few years later.

Speak up

People can't read minds, if you have something to say, speak up. Be comfortable with not always having the best idea in the room – being a team player means working collectively for the common good.

Get out of your comfort zone and stay curious

Don't get complacent and always keep challenging yourself. There are a number of things that I've had to tackle that I've learnt so much about myself and what I'm capable of.

Find your network and nurture those relationships

I've had some very influential people in my career be it managers that were incredible role models to those who provided me with a lot of autonomy so I could spread my wings and fly. I deeply treasure those relationships and will always be grateful for them. I also highly value having close relationships with my peers. Seeing them succeed is extremely rewarding.

Reach out to people you admire and grab a coffee

Most people are really lovely and are always happy to catch up for a coffee – but also go in prepared. Most people are in back-to-back meetings, if you have the opportunity to meet with them, make a lasting impression and build rapport so the relationship continues beyond the initial meeting.

Don't burn bridges

The industry is very small so always keep it professional.

Get involved in learning and development opportunities

Seek these out and get involved where you can. This year I'm part of The Observership Program – an initiative that gives future leaders the opportunity to observe a not-for-profit board and undertake a course provided by the AICD. I'm really looking forward to the experience and meeting the other participants.