

The embrace word is interesting, it doesn't just mean appreciating and understanding that women come from a different starting point, a different background or different circumstances. It's actually a shift to appreciate that different needs must be addressed by either applying different resources to assist women or different opportunities being found. What is interesting about it is that the root of equity is diversity and inclusion. I think as a society we have a long way to go to understand the difference between

equity and equality and where that leads. Diversity and inclusion are important in policy making and in our workplaces.

From our point of view at the ACMA, our graduates have recently done an impressive project on diversity and inclusion. These issues have been within our policies and we are now expanding and building on it. We are also in the middle of a project at the ACMA on measurement of plurality of news. It is about more than just diversity but one

aspect is diversity of voices. We will be looking closer at measurements in relation to gender, racial background, political views etc.

I think in essence we should focus more on diversity and inclusion in our workplace and personal lives.

**ERIN:** That is so true and very insightful. Thank you so much for your time today Creina, and Happy International Women's Day!

## Tasha Smithies

### Senior Litigation Counsel, Paramount

**Isabella Barrett**, Lawyer at Corrs Chambers Westgarth sits down with **Tasha Smithies**, Senior Litigation Counsel at Paramount to discuss International Women's Day. Tasha manages both the prepublication process and litigation matters including injunctions, defamation, copyright, contract and general commercial disputes. She has over 20 years' experience in the media law industry and has previously held roles at Australian Associated Press, Nine and Gilbert + Tobin. In 2020, Tasha was named the Lawyers Weekly Technology, Media & Telecommunications Lawyer of the Year.

**ISABELLA BARRETT:** Tasha, thanks for agreeing to be interviewed as part of this CLB special edition! Could you tell us, what does a typical day look like for you?

**TASHA SMITHIES:** There is no typical day for me, each day is different, as are the hours worked given the job is based around the rhythms of TV which is not necessarily a 9-5 office set up. Sometimes that's good, as you can get pockets of time to yourself and sometimes it's a tricky juggle as it can require weekend and evening work. My day consists of clearing content for Paramount on its various platforms - broadcast (10) on demand (10 Play) streaming (P+) and social media, overseeing a training program for our journalists and managing Paramount's litigation.

**ISABELLA:** 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?

**TASHA:** I always wanted to be a litigation lawyer as I like the court process and the strategy that sits behind any piece of litigation. However, I kind of fell into media law when I moved from Holman Webb Solicitors to Gilbert + Tobin, which led to a secondment and then a role at Nine, followed by Australian Associated Press and now nine years at Paramount.

**ISABELLA:** What energises you about work?

**TASHA:** It's never boring! It is constantly changing from day to day which keeps things interesting and challenging.

**ISABELLA:** What recent events in the Australian media law landscape most affect your organisation and role?

**TASHA:** The most obvious one would be the commencement from 1 July 2021 of the changes to defamation laws, in particular the requirement for a serious harm threshold and the single publication rule. I am also keen to see how the public interest defence and modified qualified privilege defences will operate, hopefully with a better understanding by the courts around the concept of reasonableness in the context of a tight timeframes in a busy news room. It will also be interesting to see how the Stage 2 defamation reforms in relation to internet intermediary liability unfold.

A further area of law reform to keep an eye is the Privacy Act Review, in particular the proposed introduction of a statutory tort for serious invasions of privacy (in the form recommended by the ALRC in 2014) as well as a statutory direct cause of action for individuals in the Federal Court, Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia and the operation of a journalism exemption - acknowledging that this has been tossed around for as long as I have worked in media law...

**ISABELLA:** Who is one woman in the industry whom you really admire, and why?

**TASHA:** This is a little old school and I am showing my age but Jana Wendt. I had the opportunity to meet her when I was younger and I admire her style of interviewing, as she was always firm but fair.



**ISABELLA:** The 2023 International Women's Day campaign theme is #EmbraceEquity. What does this mean to you and how would you suggest this is implemented in our readers' work and personal lives?

**TASHA:** Most of the time, this looks like being treated equally but occasionally there are circumstances where treating people differently ends up leading to a more equitable workplace - yes... it's complicated! To me equity at its heart is treating people in the workplace and in your personal interactions fairly and treating others as you would like to be treated.

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

**TASHA:** Don't expect equity if you are not prepared to put in the hard work and be valuable to the organisation where you work. Nothing comes to any of us served on a silver platter and there is no substitute for a positive attitude and a calm demeanour. Most of the time if you work hard, respect people, listen and don't get ahead of yourself, good things will happen. Voicing your opinion on everything all of the time wears people down. Be selective in your criticism - save it for the things that really matter and the times when it will make a difference.