

Julie Cheeseman

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Julie Cheeseman, Partner at Bird & Bird, specialises in media, technology and privacy disputes and advice, having managed many disputes for media and technology organisations such as defamation, copyright, contempt and suppression order and project implementation matters. **Manan Luthra**, paralegal at Network Ten, chats with Julie about her career, achievements and thoughts on International Women's Day in 2023.

MANAN LUTHRA: Julie, I'm incredibly grateful that we get to chat about the media and technology law industry, and your experiences, in the lead-up to International Women's Day. Thank you so much! The 2023 International Women's Day campaign theme is #EmbraceEquity. What does this mean to you?

JULIE CHEESEMAN: To #EmbraceEquity means to understand and acknowledge that it is through equity, and not equality, that we will achieve true inclusion. Equity recognises that each of us has different circumstances and there is no 'one size fits all approach' to allocating the resources and opportunities needed to attain an equal outcome. Providing equal opportunities is no longer sufficient. Rather, we must seek out opportunities to question and ultimately embrace the challenge of changing existing policies, procedures, services and systems that hinder an individual's ability to succeed.

MANAN: Who is one woman in the industry you really admire?

JULIE: There are so many women in our industry whom I admire. To acknowledge just one of them is an impossible ask! In the legal industry generally, of course there is my sister Elizabeth – whip smart, commercially astute, wickedly funny and incredibly generous – she is not only a great sibling but an inspiring role model in my life inside and outside of law. In the media and communications circles, there are several women whom I consider to be standouts, many of whom I worked with in the early stages of my private practice career. Those women are not only clever and creative lawyers but also successful industry leaders who actively encourage, support and celebrate the achievements of others. They are a special network!

MANAN: What are you reading right now?

JULIE: I am reading *Phosphorescence* by Julia Baird which I'm finding captivating and inspiring in equal measure. I've also just listened to a podcast about 'Blue Mind', which is a theory popularised by Wallace J Nichols that describes the semi-meditative state humans can fall into when we are proximate to water. The next book on my bedside table will actually be Nichols' own book - *Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near, In,*

On, Or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do. I'm looking forward to diving into it (excuse the pun).

MANAN: Why did you decide to pursue a career in media law?

JULIE: I wanted to pursue a career in law or journalism from a relatively young age. I think I was drawn to those areas because of my love for stories: I love hearing them; reading them; telling them; and writing them. I also love analysing texts and formulating arguments in support of a position. Although I chose to study law (and not journalism) at university, I remained curious about a career in media and pursued paid employment opportunities in both industries while studying. During that time, I was fortunate to secure a paralegal role in a large commercial firm as well as a production/broadcasting role at the Sydney Olympics. Both roles were incredibly rewarding, but my paralegal work on litigation matters (preparing evidence, mastering the documents and facts, and formulating case theory) really clarified my ambition to be a disputes lawyer, with a focus on the media and technology sectors.

MANAN: What is one career (or personal) achievement you're really proud of?

JULIE: I am fiercely proud of my family. I am also proud that my personal values drive my thinking, my behaviour and my decision making. I believe that being intentional about personal values allows us to make better choices for ourselves and have a more positive impact on those around us.

MANAN: In light of innovations like ChatGPT and platforms like TikTok, where do you see the communications and media legal landscape heading in future?

JULIE: There is little doubt our media and communications landscape in Australia will continue to evolve as our law and policy makers attempt to respond to the challenges presented by emerging platforms and technologies. Despite some changes having already been enacted or proposed, for example in the areas of competition, defamation and online safety, key areas of our legal landscape remain outdated and are not sufficiently flexible to regulate increasingly connected and complicated online activities, content generations and



data flows. There does however seem to be a renewed impetus for change following the high-profile cyber incidents in 2022 and a general desire on the part of the electorate for more control, transparency and accountability over their online activity, information and data. Summer is well and truly over for our law makers and regulators: over two consecutive weeks last month, the Government released significant reform and policy proposals concerning Australia's Privacy Act and cyber security strategy. February 2023 also saw our eSafety Commissioner require further work on draft industry safety codes and issue a second round of transparency notices focussed on child protection measures. Looking towards winter, final agreement on the next stage of defamation reform is due by mid-year and data breach class actions are already being actively case managed by the Courts, which means the possibility of interlocutory applications and decisions. Putting that all into the mix, I think the reform and enforcement of Australia's content, privacy and data laws is finally on the fast track and we will see significant developments in these areas, in particular in the next 18-24 months.

MANAN: So it sounds like an incredibly busy time for this space! How do you 'unplug'?

JULIE: Given my responses to your other questions, it will come as no surprise to you that being in the water is my favourite way to 'unplug'. There is something transformative about swimming in a pool, or in the ocean, with just my thoughts (or the odd fish) for company. The pressure of a working day seems to just wash away.

MANAN: What advice would you give the next generation of female leaders in the industry?

JULIE: Don't let a fear of the unknown stop you from taking a chance to find success outside of your comfort zone. Be curious about career opportunities and courageous in your decision making. Acknowledge that fear is a common and healthy response to the unknown, and then take the chance that scares you anyway.