

# Zoë Hibbard

## Lead Legal Counsel (APAC), Media.Monks

**David de Mestre**, Associate in Bartier Perry's Commercial Disputes and Litigation team, speaks with **Zoë Hibbard**, Lead Legal Counsel (Asia-Pacific) at **Media.Monks** – a global content, data & digital media and technology company.

Zoë is a powerhouse commercial lawyer in the media sector with over ten years' qualification experience working in both Australia and the United Kingdom. In her current role, Zoë is responsible for corporate, commercial and post-merger integration in the APAC region.

**DAVID DE MESTRE:** Zoë, how did you end up working in media law? Were you always interested in media?

**ZOË HIBBARD:** Well, I studied Law / Media & Communications at university so I'd like to say it was 100% planned, but after a number of years in private practice, a happy accident (over a pint at a pub) led to a role in-house at a renowned film production company in London and LA. I was there for nearly 5 years. At Media.Monks I have been able to build upon that experience in more expansive media - data, digital, tech, and content.

What interests me about media law is that we are now considering issues and working through challenges in the metaverse and generative AI. Who knows what innovations will be dominating legal discourse in the next few years?

**DAVID:** Tell us about a typical work day for you (including how you unplug after work).

**ZOË:** While I lead APAC with a team spread across Sydney, Singapore and Shanghai, I report into London and that means managing timezones... it doesn't matter how late I work, my inbox first thing in the morning is always full.

Days are usually busy with meetings with my team or varied internal stakeholders and finding time to prep for/action those meetings! A large part of my day is working with the business teams, and this intersection of different perspectives helps with developing 'bigger picture thinking' which is so crucial for an in-house counsel. It's this mix that keeps me engaged.

Not sure I'm the poster-child for unplugging after work, but I do try. The evening ferry is a treat, a nice circuit breaker between office/home, especially

after a couple of years predominantly working from home during the pandemic. I've also switched off all notifications outside of working hours - this means, if I'm working then it's intentional, not disruptive, which has been key.

**DAVID:** What recent events in Australian media law have had the greatest impact on your organisation/role?

**ZOË:** Definitely adtech regulation, for example the ACCC's focus on and action against Big Tech platforms. We partner with global leaders in this space, so downstream there are significant changes in the way these platforms process data and in turn, how we must mitigate these risks.

Additionally, several recent data leaks in Australia have hit the news - certainly pivoting the focus of a lot of our clients to privacy/infosecurity, and rightly so. As a legal team that advises on data analytics, digital media, technology and its intersection with privacy compliance, we've seen a dramatic increase in clients' attention to privacy and security controls in recent months and we expect that to continue.

**DAVID:** Are there any law reforms in your sector that you think are desperately needed?

**ZOË:** Being in-house, the reforms I feel are needed are also the ones that will make my job harder (especially as we work with Big Tech, data, and off-shoring)! But of course, it has to be privacy.

My work is multi-jurisdictional, and the nature of the internet, data and beyond makes this very tricky. My hope is more consistency with international data and privacy standards/frameworks.



**DAVID:** What are you most excited about working on right now?

**ZOË:** Definitely Generative AI. It's disruptive and exciting, and certainly has the attention of our global Legal & Privacy teams. Within the Legal team, we are trying to wade through the complexities of this tech, from ownership and intellectual property, to use and commercialisation, to risk analysis and mitigation. The balance to strike is not being a 'handbrake to happiness' as I've been called once or twice before by our ever-innovative business teams, a moniker that is not so rare working in-house I'm told.

**DAVID:** The 2023 International Women's Day campaign theme is #EmbraceEquity. What does this mean to you personally and how would you suggest our readers implement this in their professional and personal lives?

**ZOË:** I think as lawyers, we tend to have a mind that focuses on 'fairness', whereby if I treat everyone the same then I'm fair and everything's equal. Equity is a different metric to equality, it's not "what I am doing is fair/balanced" but "is what I am doing enough to ensure fairness based on individual need, circumstances and many other factors?" with more focus on the end result. It takes education and communication to help transition to this thinking. I'm very fortunate at Media.Monks that we have a very powerful diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) practice at a global and regional level, and ERG's supporting

and advocating for many different groups and educating the global team accordingly. If your workplace doesn't offer this, I'd encourage you to seek out an organisation that genuinely focuses on DE&I, and that offers support and education to increase your awareness of equity both in your professional and personal lives.

**DAVID:** What are you most excited about for your role and organisation in 2023?

**ZOE:** What excites me is that Media Monks is disrupting the industry. I've

been at Media Monks for just over 2 and a half years, and it never disappoints. It cuts across so many media disciplines, which means my team are always learning new things (and new things to dissect and understand from a legal perspective). Part of the fun is bridging the gap. The Data team like to think we speak their language (and we do try!), the Creative team are 'creatives', and these different pillars have different needs and risk profiles, not to mention spanning across multiple jurisdictions.

We are also so fortunate to have strong female leadership across the global

legal team, from the General Counsel to regional leads and the wider legal team, which certainly makes for a supportive environment for success.

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

**ZOE:** I'd like to be asked this question in another 5-10 years, but to draw on something I was told once and I think about daily - be ambitious, but if you don't practise contentment now, you'll never be content when you get what you want.

## Sarah Stone

Senior Corporate Counsel,  
Optus Satellite & Space Systems

**Antonia Wayne-Boyle**, Intellectual Property and Technology lawyer at Clayton Utz, speaks to **Sarah Stone**, Senior Corporate Counsel at Optus Satellite & Space Systems about what a typical day looks like for a 'space lawyer' and how we can #EmbraceEquity by giving each individual the tools or opportunities they need to succeed.

**ANTONIA WAYNE-BOYLE:** Could you explain your role and what a typical day looks like for you?

**SARAH STONE:** It can be hard to nail down what is a 'typical day', but I'll give it a go!

- Step 1: Wake up – often far too early – to organise kids and get them to school
- Step 2: Have a STRONG coffee. Note the success of completing Step 1 (get kids to school – on time) and the rest of the day's objectives is highly dependent on Step 2!
- Step 3: Check emails, calendar and prioritise the day's activities
- Step 4: Take or make a work call or join a meeting, then circle back to Step 3
- Step 5: Repeat Steps 3 & 4 endlessly
- Step 6: Get to the end of the day and marvel at how it ended up being so different from what I'd planned at the beginning

On a more serious note, my typical day is spent advising Optus' Satellite & Space Systems business on some really exciting and challenging projects. I get to have conversations with incredibly intelligent and talented Optus colleagues about the cutting edge and transformational space programs we have underway, including

the new OPTUS-11 spacecraft that will be in geo-stationary orbit 36,000km from Earth and the Mission Extension Pod we plan to attach to one of our existing satellites to extend its life. I learn something new every day and consider myself incredibly fortunate to be able to call myself a 'space lawyer'.

**ANTONIA:** What developments do you see on the horizon in 2023 for the communications and media law landscape?

**SARAH:** In my area in particular, the increasing focus on commercialisation of space activities is a gamechanger. The laws that apply to space activities are generally a combination of international space treaties made at a time when space exploration was controlled by governments, and national laws that don't necessarily translate well to activities in space. It will be really interesting to see how legal and regulatory frameworks evolve to accommodate this 'new frontier'.

**ANTONIA:** Is there anything you have learned through your career that you would like to give as advice to your younger self?

**SARAH:** Believe in yourself and don't let those feelings of being an 'imposter' take over. I've battled imposter syndrome my whole working life (and still do!). However, I've realised now I need to trust



the angel on my shoulder and not give in to that devil inside my head (...kudos to anyone who recognises the reference to a Kaskade song... EDM rules!)

**ANTONIA:** The 2023 IWD campaign theme is #EmbraceEquity. What does this mean to you and how might that be implemented in our readers' work and personal lives?

**SARAH:** For me, #EmbraceEquity at its very basic level means giving each person a fair go by providing them with the tools or opportunities they (as an individual) need to be successful. It's not enough to treat everyone the same. We need to recognise and celebrate everyone as an individual.

**ANTONIA:** If there is one thing you would celebrate about the legal industry on International Women's Day, what would it be?

**SARAH:** Our willingness to adapt and challenge traditional norms. It can sometimes be hard-going, but each time we do it, we challenge those stereotypes and show that as an industry we can #EmbraceEquity.