

Clare Gill

Chief Regulatory and Sustainability Officer, Seven West Media

Tess Mierendorff, IP Senior Associate at HSF Sydney, spoke with **Clare Gill**, Chief Regulatory and Sustainability Officer at Seven West Media, to discuss her career to date, International Women's Day, and the future of media regulation in Australia.

TESS MIERENDORFF: Thanks for agreeing to talk with us as we celebrate International Women's Day, Clare. Could you tell us a little about your current role and how your career path led you to where you are today?

CLARE GILL: I am currently the Chief Regulatory and Sustainability Officer for Seven West Media where I get to immerse myself in the future of media. This involves looking where the industry is going, current and emerging technologies and evaluating the need for new policy settings to ensure sustainability for free premium content creators like Seven West Media in an increasingly competitive media and advertising market.

I also have the privilege to work on Seven's Sustainability strategy and promoting the great work Seven does in contributing to communities, working towards being a more inclusive business, supporting future generations, and improving our impact on the environment, through improving our own practices and also using our platform for environmental causes such as Planet Ark's National Recycling Week.

I started my career in Politics working for a Victorian State Minister. While working in politics, I was attracted to the role of the press secretary and undertook a postgraduate in media and communications. I followed my post-grad diploma with a Master of Arts, Communications where I took a deep dive into the structure of the Australian Media and the regulatory environment. In my earlier career I worked for a technology and telecommunications consultancy, then moved to Ericsson, NICTA (now CSIRO's Data 61) where I built my understanding of technology and how new technologies go from concept to the market. I then took time out when my children were young but continued my studies doing a post-grad in commerce. I then took on an executive role at Optus leading Government and Corporate Affairs, then moved to Nine. Seven West Media recognised my experience and offered me the role at Seven West Media, where I am currently

working on some interesting and forward-looking regulatory challenges.

Working for various technology businesses has given me a unique insight into the development of some very interesting technologies. I saw the birth of Bluetooth as a technology standard and grow to become a product built into most connected devices, and been involved from analogue mobile telecommunication, through to 3, 4 and now 5G. This set me up for working in contemporary media businesses which are not only content businesses but technology businesses.

TESS: You've held senior government and regulatory affairs roles in a number of different media companies – what energises you about your work?

CLARE: The constant change brought about by advances in technology. Advances in technology always interest me and the intersection between technology and regulation is the most energising aspect of my work. While new technology can create new and exciting business and opportunities, left unchecked they can be harmful.

For example, ChatGPT and its potential is impressive, however with this new advance in AI, new concerns arise including how do we protect the intellectual property of content creators underpinning these new technologies.

TESS: I'm sure you have had some excellent mentors and role models during your career – can you share the best piece of work-related advice you received?

CLARE: "Life is not black and white; the best leaders are those who successfully navigate the grey".

TESS: What is the greatest risk you've taken in your professional life, and how did it turn out?

CLARE: I have taken a few career breaks to pursue further studies (and spend time with my children). At the time it



seemed scary to stop the trajectory of my career to learn skills that I believed would assist me in the future.

I would recommend further studies to expand your skills and understanding of business. While I have done a few formally recognised degrees, I also have done several shorter courses or single subjects to fill gaps in my skill set.

TESS: It is shaping up to be a big year for regulatory reform in the media sector. The Federal Government has recently released its News Media Bargaining Code Review, unveiled a new National Cultural Policy – Revive, and there are further reforms on the horizon. What do you see as the biggest challenges (and opportunities) for the media sector in the year ahead?

CLARE: For the free-to-air sector, the work on regulated prominence is essential and swift implementation will help underpin the future of the free TV sector in Australia. The biggest challenge, however, is making sure the right balance is struck between all the reform measures being pursued by the Government and ensuring there are no unintended consequences which undermine the public policy objectives of a vibrant media market. Further, the importance of the ACCC's work on regulating digital platforms cannot be overstated. A great deal of very detailed analysis has been undertaken by the ACCC to make informed pro-competition regulatory recommendations. If the Government can effectively regulate the dominance of the platforms and their harmful behaviour, competition and the long-term interests of the end user will be better protected.

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

CLARE: We need to take the time and explain to those who don't understand their views and learned behaviours are no longer acceptable, why, and how things have changed and give them the

chance to learn and adapt to a more inclusive working environment. Just telling people they are wrong or out of touch does not lead to positive change.

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

CLARE: The regulatory field in media has truly #embracedequity. The female regulatory leaders in media are truly

inspiring, and capable women. I am honoured to be working in this field with so many senior female leaders.

TESS: And lastly, what advice would you give to the next generation of leaders in the industry?

CLARE: Build strong networks. A strong positive network can provide advice, open up new opportunities and become life-long friends.

Madeleine James

Senior Associate, Corrs

Madeleine James is a Senior Associate in the Commercial Litigation and Technology, Media and Telecommunications groups at Corrs Chambers Westgarth, and a former member of the CAMLA Young Lawyers (2018-2022). Her practice is focused on media and technology disputes, defamation and pre-publication advice, as well as general commercial litigation.

Nicola McLaughlin, Legal Counsel (Marketing & Consumer) at NBN Co, sits down with Madeleine to discuss her career to date, and her thoughts on International Women's Day.



NICOLA MCLAUGHLIN: 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?

MADELEINE JAMES: Definitely not. I was adamant that I was going to work in journalism or television production when I grew up, and would get annoyed when family members suggested I'd make a good lawyer. But when I finished school, I was in a position where I could get into a law degree, and decided to combine it with journalism. It wasn't long before I realised I was much more passionate about my law studies. I had a few jobs in TV and digital media during university, but wanted to try working in law. I got a clerkship, and the rest is history. Having a background and interest in media definitely led me towards the specific role I'm in now, working as a disputes lawyer on a range of matters involving media, technology and defamation.

NICOLA: What recent events in the Australian media law landscape most affect your organisation/role?

MADELEINE: The ongoing review of the Model Defamation Provisions, and the amendments introduced in 2021, have probably had the biggest impact on my role and on many of the digital platforms and technology clients my team works with. Together with some significant decisions handed down by the courts in recent years, such as the High Court's

decision in *Defteros*, the recent changes have impacted nearly every aspect of defamation proceedings.

NICOLA: Are there any law reforms in your sector that you think are desperately needed? If so, what are they?

MADELEINE: Not too surprising, given my previous answer – I'm eager to see the results of the Stage 2 defamation review concerning digital platforms. We heard late last year that the next stage of reforms should involve conditional exemptions for internet intermediaries, and a new form of innocent dissemination defence, but we've yet to see the specifics.

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

MADELEINE: The honest answer is Phoebe Waller-Bridge, who strikes me as a smart, creative woman at the top of her game.

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

MADELEINE: I have been lucky to work with several really impressive women in my career, including colleagues, clients and counsel. I won't name and praise them without their permission, so instead I will tell you the standout tips and pieces of advice I've picked up from them: There

is no shame in asking a simple question, especially when it looks like others may benefit from the answer or have lost sight of its importance. It never hurts to have the person on the other side be your friend, so unless there is a reason not to be, be known as someone who is reasonable and accommodating. Be more prepared and five minutes earlier than you think you need to be.

NICOLA: How do you unplug from work?

MADELEINE: I swim laps, and I go to the movies fairly often – basically, forced time away from my phone. People who work with me also know I'm a big advocate of the midday wellbeing walk.

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

MADELEINE: I still see myself as being in a formative part of my career, with a lot to learn from women in the industry (many of whom will be interviewed for this edition). But thinking of the next generation of women who are at the start of their careers, I would say – take ownership of (and credit for!) the work that you do; rely on and support the other women around you; and approach every opportunity with the confidence of your male peers.