

Lynette Ireland

Chief General Counsel, Foxtel Group

James Hanrahan, Senior Legal Counsel at Paramount, interviews **Lynette Ireland**, Chief General Counsel, Executive Director Regulatory and Company Secretary of the Foxtel Group, to discuss Lynette's career, the media industry and Lynette's thoughts on International Women's Day. In addition to her roles at the Foxtel Group, Lynette is a board member of the Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association (ASTRA), Creative Content Australia and the Media and Communications Committee of the Law Council of Australia. Lynette has been a driving force within Foxtel on a number of key transactions, which in the last 12 months alone have included negotiation of the various agreements related to the launch of Foxtel Group's new product Hubbl, renewal of Foxtel's sports rights agreements with Cricket Australia, and the renewal of Foxtel's long-standing partnership with Warner Bros Discovery. Lynette is also managing the regulatory strategy for the Foxtel Group during a period where the Government is implementing significant media law reforms, including in relation to Australian content, anti-siphoning, prominence and gambling advertising.

JAMES HANRAHAN: Lynette on behalf of our readers, I want to thank you so much for your time to tell us about your career and discuss the media industry and International Women's Day. Could you explain your current roles and what led you to this point? Was Chief General Counsel something you always saw yourself doing?

LYNETTE IRELAND: I am Chief General Counsel and Executive Director of Regulatory for the Foxtel Group that includes the Foxtel pay TV business together with our various streaming services Kayo Sports, Binge, Flash and Lifestyle, our new streaming aggregation product Hubbl and Foxtel Media, our advertising sales business. I have been at Foxtel since start-up and like many in-house lawyers, I started my career at a large law firm, Allens. I had some great mentors at Allens and ended up working on a number of very interesting transactions for the first few years.

During my time at Allens, I developed my love of media law and my first secondment was with the Australian Film Finance Corporation where I had the opportunity to really learn about the making of film and television. This was also during the era that Australian films were starting to make their mark on the international stage including *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and *Muriel's Wedding*. It was really rewarding to see projects you worked on turn into pictures and sound and I enjoyed being part of the process that extended well beyond the legal agreements. It also inspired me to undertake a Film Production course at night to help me better understand the practical side of film making.

After returning to Allens I knew that I wanted to eventually move in-house on a permanent basis and again I was lucky that a secondment opportunity came up with a new joint venture between News and Telstra. At that stage, it did not have a name and there were approximately 25 people working in a small office in George Street just up from Jacksons on George which became a regular haunt on a Friday night. I was told to ask for "Freudy" when I arrived. It turned out that "Freudy" was Richard

Freudenstein, who was also an Allens alum and had been parachuted in by News to help set up the new joint venture. Over the next 6 months we lived on pizza and cheese corn chips and worked around the clock to get deals done as the cable race was on between Optus and Telstra and they were both keen to launch their pay television service before the other. It was an amazing time – I sat next to the Sales guy and overheard some of the funniest conversations as he tried to explain to people what cable television was. By the end of my 12 month secondment I knew that I really wanted to stay and be part of the Foxtel adventure and the rest is history!

JAMES: What's the best work-related advice you've ever received? And what advice would you give to your younger self, if you could?

LYNETTE: The best work related advice I have ever received is that I have to back myself. It is obviously easier to do this with more experience, but it applies to everything I do (including being a mum to 2 teenage daughters). The advice I would give to my younger self is also – "back yourself". Lawyers are very good at working behind the scenes and making everyone else look good, but we have to also promote ourselves. Back yourself and don't hesitate to put up your hand when opportunities come your way. You never want to regret not having pursued an opportunity.

JAMES: Is there a woman, either in the industry or in your personal life, who inspired you to pursue the career that you've made for yourself? If so, who was it and what did they do that encouraged you?

LYNETTE: Over the years I have worked with many brilliant women both within Foxtel and externally. I worked with a number of amazing women at Allens. Those partners were very gracious when I decided to make the call to go in-house and continued to be fantastic supporters. Michelle Guthrie was General Counsel of Foxtel for a few years after Richard moved into a commercial role and is another woman who I also found inspirational. Michelle had been over at Sky UK and moved back to Australia with her young family. Michelle was a great example



of a woman who managed to do it all in the role that I eventually took on when Michelle decided to head to Hong Kong to work at Star TV – balancing working in a demanding job and having a young family. Michelle was also a greater supporter of both myself and the other women working in the team at the time and has continued to be so over the years.

I also have a great recollection of a discussion I once had with The Honourable Julie Bishop. Many years ago I appeared on a House of Representative Committee that Julie was on – she was newly elected and had previously had a career in the law. She came up to speak to me after my appearance and was so complimentary and encouraging and that conversation has always stayed with me.

JAMES: What's the greatest risk you've taken as a professional?

LYNETTE: I have said no to a number of great opportunities over the years and instead chosen to stay with Foxtel in an era where most people are changing their career paths on a regular basis. My goal when I finished law school was to move into a role where I love going to work and which excites me. Foxtel has definitely fulfilled that goal. I have been lucky in that Foxtel is constantly reinventing itself and our shareholders have always been very ambitious which means I have had the opportunity to work on many diverse transactions over the years including 2 major mergers, numerous major sports rights and content deals, complex debt financing arrangements and numerous court cases including one of the biggest and most expensive court cases in Australian legal history (C7 litigation). I have also worked with 7 Foxtel CEOs who have all had very different styles. My role has also enabled me to meet many amazing people including Prime Ministers, Members of Parliament, many sports stars, actors and actresses, CEOs and Chairs of the ACCC and the ACMA and many inspirational executives including those within Australian sporting organisations, production companies and other Australian and international media companies.

JAMES: In the age of artificial intelligence, streaming services, the rise of social media and increased privacy regulation, where do you see the Australian media landscape in the next 5 to 10 years? What trends or challenges do you anticipate?

LYNETTE: I think we are going to continue to see enormous change in the Australian media industry over the next 5-10 years. We are already operating in a highly competitive environment and we have seen many international businesses launch media services in Australia over the last 5 years. As a result, we have seen the Foxtel Group and the Australian FTAs reinventing their business models and moving more into the digital space. It was only 8 years

or so ago that Netflix entered Australia and we are now spoilt for choice. The challenge will be how consumers respond to so many choices.

JAMES: The 2024 International Women's Day campaign theme is *Inspire Inclusion*. What does this mean to you and how would you suggest this is implemented in our readers' work and personal lives?

LYNETTE: The theme of Inspiring Inclusion means actively leading and mentoring others to create an environment which enables everyone to feel that they can achieve their best. It is particularly important to role model those behaviours that you would like to see reflected back.

The Foxtel Group has always been a big supporter of women and International Women's Day. I have had the pleasure of working with many amazing women during my time at Foxtel – many on our Executive teams, within my direct team and through our talent and partners including News Corp, Telstra, BBC, Sky News, Warner Bros Discovery, NBCU and the studios. Foxtel has always been an organisation that recognises talent and celebrates success which is one of the reasons that I have enjoyed working here for as long as I have.

JAMES: Thank you so much for your time, Lynette, and Happy International Women's Day!

Julia Atcherley

Head of Legal and VP, Content, Condé Nast (UK)

Ashleigh Fehrenbach, Senior Associate at RPC and CLB Co-editor, interviews **Julia Atcherley**, Head of Legal and VP, Content at Condé Nast. Julia is based in London and, prior to Condé Nast, she was Assistant General Counsel at Reuters News at Thomson Reuters. Before that, she was in-house counsel at both The Guardian and Channel 4. Prior to her move to London, Julia was in New York where she was Lead Counsel at the Daily Beast and an associate at a boutique media US firm. She started off her career in Australia as a solicitor at KWM. Ashleigh discusses with Julia her incredible media law career to date, and her thoughts on International Women's Day.

ASHLEIGH FEHRENBACH: Hi Julia! Thanks so much for chatting with us. Can you tell me about your career path and how it led you to where you are today?

JULIA ATCHERLEY: My father's favourite saying was "1% inspiration 99% perspiration" – but to be honest, it's also a great deal of luck and timing. I had initially wanted to work in human rights, but during my Masters at law school in New York, I became fascinated by constitutional law and freedom of speech. What resonated with me most was how media freedom is essential for the protection of all other human rights. As luck would have it, just as I was graduating, a role became available at my professor's boutique law firm which focused on free speech and media law, called Levine Sullivan Koch & Schulz. Our clients included many of my favourite publishers, including Condé Nast... and after a few years, a few different in-house roles at The Daily Beast, Channel Four, The Guardian and Reuters News, as well as a move to London in between, here I am!

ASHLEIGH: What is the best part of your role as Head of Legal and VP, Content at Condé and conversely, what part is the most challenging?

JULIA: The best part of my role is the people – working with talented, interesting and dedicated individuals across both the legal team and our editorial and business colleagues, sharing a common purpose and a pride in the brands and content that we support. The most challenging part of my role, but also the most interesting, is ensuring that there are adequate legal

protections for our company and our industry in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

ASHLEIGH: Are there any law reforms that you think are desperately needed in the media and publishing space? If so, what are they?

JULIA: Having worked for global media companies for many years, there are a LOT of law reforms I would like to see, depending on the country. However, one key reform that is desperately needed around the world is adequate legislation that ensures that publishers are fairly remunerated for the use of their content in Generative AI tools. Human creativity is the bedrock of the publishing and wider creative industries, and can only thrive with a strong copyright regime, compensation, credit for authors and other creators, and rights holders' control. Generative AI has also been used to spread disinformation, and is prone to inaccuracies and biases, increasing the risk of circulating misinformation. For these reasons, it's critical that we protect and support reliable and trusted sources of information, with clear and enforceable regulation.

ASHLEIGH: As a global publishing business, Condé Nast has been at the helm of many changes in the publishing world in recent years (e.g a shift to digital content, the advent of everyday use of AI). What change are you most excited about that will have a positive impact on publishing?

JULIA: While AI poses a significant risk to the publishing industry, there are also a number of AI applications that have the potential to improve and streamline



business processes – allowing for more time and resources to be directed towards producing quality content and supporting human creativity.

ASHLEIGH: What is a piece of work-related advice someone has shared with you which you really valued?

JULIA: You're far more likely to succeed at something you enjoy doing!

ASHLEIGH: The 2024 International Women's Day campaign theme is 'Inspire Inclusion'. With that theme in mind, what piece of content would you recommend our readers watch or read in the wake of International Women's Day?

JULIA: In thinking about inclusivity in the context of free speech, Jeannie Suk Gersen wrote a thought-provoking piece recently for The New Yorker titled "The Future of Academic Freedom," which considers renewed challenges facing the ability to express diverse viewpoints and openly debate difficult subjects.

ASHLEIGH: Fascinating! I'll check it out. Thanks so much Julia – we're so glad to have had the benefit of your insights. Happy International Women's Day!