

TARA: The 2024 International Women's Day campaign theme is Inspire Inclusion. What does this mean to you? And how would you like to see it applied in the legal industry?

LEANNE: When I think back to when I started as a lawyer, I had two male partners of the firm who were my bosses. They couldn't have been more inclusive in terms of training me well and giving me opportunities to work on great cases, allowing me to develop a real expertise in the area. I look back and think, unlike some other women in the industry, I've never had a situation where I have experienced discrimination or a male being favoured ahead of me or anything like that. So when I see the phrase Inspire Inclusion, it really resonates with me as that was my

experience - being included and having opportunities. I'd like to see that perpetuated and replicated throughout the whole legal industry. I think that things are a lot better than they used to be and even though I didn't experience discrimination as a young lawyer, I know many women who did. If I could see young women coming into the profession now having the same inclusive experiences that I had, that's really what I'd wish for.

TARA: What advice would you give someone who wants to follow in your footsteps?

LEANNE: I think every person, not just in the legal profession or in the media law world, has to make the most of every opportunity. I've spoken to many young people who want to become media lawyers and are desperate

to get a foot in the door and I tell them you've just got to take the opportunities that come your way and try and turn them into career positives. If you want to build on that and have a career in media law that's really all you can do - if you get that opportunity, you must capitalise on it. I suppose that's what I did when I started, not that I was conscious of it, but I was put in a situation, put in that team, I really enjoyed the work, I worked hard and did the best I could. Those kinds of opportunities lead to other opportunities and I think that's the best thing you can strive for, making the most of the circumstances that come your way.

TARA: That's great advice. Thank you so much Leanne for sharing your insights with us.

Melanie McLean

Lead Commercial Counsel, Meta

Jeren Gul, Associate at Gadens, speaks with **Melanie McLean**, Lead Commercial Counsel at Meta in London, to discuss her career and thoughts on International Women's Day. Having moved from private practice at KWM to in-house roles at Network Ten and now Meta, Melanie holds a wealth of experience in the technology, media, sport and entertainment sectors.

JEREN GUL: Thanks for agreeing to chat with us! You worked in private practice and in-house in one of Australia's leading media companies, before making the move to Meta. Aside from the relocation to London, what would you say is the greatest difference you have noticed in your role at Meta compared with past roles and what has been the most challenging?

MELANIE MCLEAN: I feel my training and roles in Australia definitely set me up well with the skills and mindset for the challenge of relocating to London, for which I'm really grateful! One difference is that given Meta is constantly developing new technology and ways of connecting people, and the accompanying proliferation of new regulation around the world, I've had to become comfortable counselling the business on things which may not have been done before and for which there may not yet be legal or market precedent.

Also with Meta being a global company and my role covering most regions of the world, basically everything that I work on has cross-border elements whether it be the fact that my business partners, cross-functional colleagues or the external partner are based in another country, that foreign regulations need to be considered, or the relevant Meta product may need country-specific adaptations. I love this aspect of my role, but it does lead to the most challenging aspect - juggling time zones!

JEREN: What does a typical day look like for you?

MELANIE: I typically start my day by scrolling media law and tech sector bulletins (e.g. Media Law Resource Center, Techmeme and TLDR) to keep up to date with what is happening in the industry. I'll also prioritise any APAC matters so that I can meet with any internal or external partners before they

finish their workday. You'll then likely find me drafting or reviewing partner drafts of media/licensing-related contracts, seeking input from my business partners and cross-functional colleagues, attending contract negotiation calls with external partners, and prepping for meetings with my US colleagues who start coming online around lunch time.

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

MELANIE: Leaving a role that I absolutely loved at Network 10 to relocate to London (unemployed and unbeknownst to me, arriving in London only weeks before the pandemic broke out!). That risk has turned out to be one of my life's greatest experiences though - both personally and professionally.

JEREN: Given your unique experience working in a global technology company, are there any reforms you think Australia desperately needs to keep up with the evolving technology and the way people communicate and consume news through social media?

MELANIE: I couldn't answer this question without mentioning AI, which will make it increasingly difficult for people to determine fact from fiction when consuming news and, naturally, policy and legislative reform (or wholesale new regulation) is needed. I do however hope that, rather than focusing solely on regulating the risks, Australia finds ways to support and encourage entrepreneurs to take advantage of the AI boom - particularly female entrepreneurs! I'd love to see more Australian-born tech start-ups operating in Europe and beyond - it makes me proud!

JEREN: The 2024 International Women's Day campaign theme is Inspire Inclusion. Who is someone, whether real or fictional, who has inspired others around them to be more inclusive and how have they done that?



MELANIE: In our world of shrinking attention spans and content overload, I love how Sheryl Sandberg (former COO of Meta and author/founder of Lean In) uses hard-hitting statistics which can serve as "light bulb" moments for people to realise the challenges and inequities faced by women and other minorities and take steps to be more mindful and inclusive as a result.

JEREN: Finally, what advice would you give to the next generation of female lawyers in the industry?

MELANIE: First, I joined the legal profession with a misperception that to be an effective lawyer, I would need a firm and tough personality. I've since learned that my strengths as a transactional/partnerships lawyer typically lay in softer skills like being a good listener and empathetic to partners' positions so that we can find mutually acceptable solutions quicker and set the partnership up on a positive note.

Second, you're not expected to have the answer to everything all of the time. It's ok to say "let me consider that and come back to you".

Third, exuding enthusiasm, curiosity, and a strong willingness to learn means that people are more likely to invest in your professional development and keep you in mind for cool new opportunities!

JEREN: Brilliant! Thanks so much Melanie, and happy International Women's Day!