

Maddie Marchant

Legal Counsel, BBC Studios Australia

Kristi Hewetson, Senior Associate in Baker McKenzie's IP Tech team and CAMLA Young Lawyers Committee Member, sits down with **Maddie Marchant**, Legal Counsel, Business & Legal Affairs at BBC Studios, to discuss her career and thoughts on International Women's Day. Maddie is a highly experienced lawyer specialising in television production and distribution and has been instrumental in bringing many of your favourite TV shows to your screen.

KRISTI HEWETSON: Can you tell me about your career path and how it led you to your exciting role at BBC Studios?

MADDIE MARCHANT: Like many of us, I dreamed of being an actress – with my strawberry blonde hair I was already on my way to be the next Nicole Kidman. I later resolved that I didn't quite have the right strengths (read: talent) for that career path, but I wanted to find another way to work within the media and entertainment industry. Enter, the law.

At university I studied any IP and media-related subject on offer. I enjoyed them all, and that settled it.

As I was completing my College of Law Diploma, I was lucky enough to come across a job posting for a paralegal in the Business Affairs and Legal team at television production company Fremantle Australia. Despite being a paralegal role rather than lawyer, I couldn't turn down the rare opportunity to get my foot in the door. The bet paid off – I fell in love with the work and was promoted to a practising lawyer position within a few months. After three years at Fremantle, I made the difficult decision to leave my wonderful team and the company where I started my career and had learnt so much.

My next role at Warner Bros. International Television Production Australia gave me the opportunity to lead carriage of shows, from negotiating commissioning agreements to being the primary contact for the crew throughout production.

In late 2022, I was approached for my current role at BBC Studios Australia. In addition to supporting the growing production business, the role involves working across the distribution business which was largely uncharted territory for me. After an initial learning curve to understand the various commercial areas and the global BBC/BBC Studios landscape, I thoroughly enjoy the unique position of our BLA team where I am afforded an overview and made privy to developments across the business.

KRISTI: You've worked on a vast number of interesting productions over the years (including some scandalous reality TV!). What have been your favourite productions to work on in your career, and why?

MADDIE: Watching the *The Bachelor/Bachelorette* was a staple in my house growing up, so working on a few seasons of that format was a thrill.

Despite being all-consuming at times, I enjoyed the craziness of *Australia's Got Talent* which was my first 'shiny floor' format. It

was on those productions that I discovered that, along with general commercial and legal knowledge, I would need to develop a comprehensive understanding of insurance and health and safety. The learnings from *AGT* have put me in good stead over the years, especially for shows such as *Farmer Wants A Wife* and *Top Gear Australia*.

I also assisted in the development for *Heartbreak High*. It was so exciting when Netflix ANZ announced it as their first scripted commission. Unfortunately, I moved companies as shoot commenced and wasn't able to see it through to the end, but I got to enjoy the final product with the rest of the world. I'm currently working on *Return To Paradise* which will be the first scripted production that I see from initial development to delivery. I find immense joy in being one of the first to read the scripts and see the cast line-up.

Outside of the TV space, I enjoy working on the production of live events for *Bluey*, such as the recently announced *Bluey's World*. The nature of the program means there is a lot of pressure to select the right partners and negotiate the best deals, but it's exciting to support the team bring more adventures of the Heeler family to the world.

The beauty of working in production is that you can see the fruits of your labour and celebrate with colleagues when the audience enjoys a project you have worked on for months, sometimes years.

KRISTI: What is the best part of your job, and conversely, what part is the most challenging?

MADDIE: I thoroughly enjoy the variety of work that I do – a 'jack of all trades', if you will. With my current role servicing several business lines – including development and production of content, distribution of international content into Australia, and ancillary exploitation from brand licencing – no day is ever the same. In conjunction with various types of work, I get to work with a diverse team of wonderfully talented people.

However, such a broad remit means you need to be able to juggle several projects. Generally, there is a natural ebb and flow between business units, but when several are at their peak there is a lot of manage. It's important to be able to assess priorities regularly and quickly and have clear communication, both internally and with external parties.

KRISTI: What advice would you give to your younger self?

MADDIE: Don't be afraid to admit that you don't know the answer or that you don't understand what is being discussed or being



asked of you. No one expects you to know everything, have all the answers or know all the information right away (especially with so many acronyms in this business!), but unless you ask they may assume that you do.

KRISTI: What do you enjoy most about working in-house?

MADDIE: As someone who is naturally curious (some may call it nosy!), I enjoy being part of the journey from the inception of an idea through to seeing the resulting end product, and being privy to and providing guidance at every twist and turn.

KRISTI: Over the past few years, have you noticed a dramatic shift in the Australian media landscape and if so, how has it affected you?

MADDIE: I don't think it's news to anyone that there have been dramatic changes and consequential pressures in both the Australian and broader global media landscape in recent years. The rise of streaming, subsequently leading to international streaming giants entering the relatively small Australian market, has brought both opportunity and challenges. Covid also led to a decrease in advertising spend which has put pressure on the budgets of networks and sponsors. Also, it would be remiss of me not to mention AI.

Businesses need to be agile and also be across proposed amendments to both policy and legislation. In a business like BBC Studios which operates across several fields, often market changes and policy proposals affect business areas in conflicting ways which can be difficult to navigate.

It's been an interesting time to practice in this industry, and with technology evolving at such a rapid rate there's more change to come. I have no doubt that we'll see changes in our local industry union agreements following the outcomes of the US strikes last year.

KRISTI: If you could only read one book for the rest of your life, what would it be?

MADDIE: I'll cheat and say the set of books by Taylor Jenkins Reid known as her "famous women quartet" – *The Seven Husbands of*

Evelyn Hugo, Daisy Jones & the Six, Malibu Rising and Carrie Soto Is Back. Although fictional books, the stories and characters are inspired by real people or events (or postulations of events). They are a perfect mix of some of my favourite things - pop culture, Hollywood, music, sport and history.

KRISTI: Tell me about a woman in your industry who inspires you, and why?

MADDIE: I've had the privilege of working with some incredibly impressive women, both within legal teams and broader commercial teams. I've grown to appreciate that there isn't just a single woman for me to look up to and be inspired by. I'm lucky to be practising at a time where I can look across the industry and see so many women in senior and decision making roles. I hope to

follow in their footsteps and emulate some of their successes throughout my own career.

KRISTI: Thanks so much for your time Maddie. Happy International Women's Day!

Rebecca De Stoop

Barrister, Nigel Bowen Chambers

Maddie Marchant, Legal Counsel, BBC Studios Australia, sits down with **Rebecca De Stoop**, Barrister, Nigel Bowen Chambers, to discuss Rebecca's career and her admiration for other women in the legal industry.

After several years at law firm Banki Haddock Fiora, Rebecca was called to the bar in 2014 where she specialises in intellectual property law, with a particular focus on copyright, patents, trade marks and consumer protection. She is an experienced litigator and has acted for clients across a broad range of industries, appearing in the Federal and Federal Circuit Courts as well as the Copyright Tribunal and IP Australia. In recognition of her significant expertise and ability, she has been named by Doyle's Guide as one of the leading New South Wales Intellectual Property Junior Counsel across several years.

MADDIE MARCHANT: Thanks for taking the time to chat with me Rebecca, and congratulations on being recognised by Doyle's Guide as a Leading Intellectual Property Junior Counsel again last year. Did you always want to be a barrister? If so, can you tell me what you did to position yourself to get where you are now? If not, how did your career path lead you here?

REBECCA DE STOOP: Thank you very much. Leaving aside the brief moment in time where I wanted to be an Oscar winning actress, I always wanted to work in law. It wasn't until I was practising as a junior lawyer in litigation that I realised that I would love to be a barrister.

I'm lucky in that I genuinely enjoy the practice area I've been working in over the past ten years and I love what I do. I'm invested in the outcomes (possibly too much!) that I can achieve for my clients. I'm also fortunate to have a terrific community of colleagues on my floor.

MADDIE: 2024 will be your tenth year as a barrister. What do you like best about your work?

REBECCA: I love lots of things about being a barrister but I do really enjoy the advocacy aspect of my work. I also love becoming an expert in (often random) subject matter for a short period of time. For example, I've worked on cases about mine tailings where I needed to learn all the ins and outs of the process of separating the valuable minerals from the waste product and then, a short time later, I'm briefed in something entirely different (but equally fascinating), such as how to value music in a particular setting.

MADDIE: Sounds like exciting variety. What's the greatest risk you've taken as a professional?

REBECCA: I think probably moving from private practice to the bar. I was fortunate to work at an incredible IP law firm, where I was exposed to some really interesting and important cases and worked closely with some of Australia's best IP practitioners, so it wasn't an easy decision to walk away from that.

Ultimately, I had to back myself because it was something I really wanted to do. In many ways, it felt a bit like jumping off a cliff at the start and it certainly wasn't easy, but it was worth the leap of faith.

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

REBECCA: I think that AI and the speed at which changes in this technology are evolving is a big issue. Law reform is a slow moving beast and the risks of technology racing beyond legislative reform are very real. There are a number of interesting overseas cases, particularly in the copyright space that I am watching closely.

MADDIE: Tell me about a woman in your industry whom you admire, and why?

REBECCA: I really admire the former Chief Justice of the High Court, Susan Kiefel. She dropped out of school at 15, was a barrister by the age of 21 and is renowned for being incredibly intelligent. She was the third female judge appointed to the High Court and the first female Chief Justice, which

is obviously more than impressive. I also thought that she handled the allegations of sexual harassment against former Justice Dyson Heydon impeccably.

MADDIE: How do you enjoy spending your time outside of work?

REBECCA: I have a deep (and eclectic) love of music, theatre and, as must follow, musical theatre, so I try to get to a live version of any of those whenever I can.

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

REBECCA: It almost goes without saying - Ruth Bader Ginsburg. She was a phenomenal woman, who was a strong believer in listening and learning from others. She was incredibly hard working and made a tangible impact in her lifetime.

MADDIE: Any finally, what is the best professional advice you have ever received?

REBECCA: Don't take yourself too seriously.

MADDIE: Thanks so much Rebecca. It's been a pleasure hearing your insights. Happy International Women's Day!

