

Ashleigh Fehrenbach

Senior Associate, RPC

Ahead of International Women's Day, **Anjali Nadaradjane**, lawyer at MinterEllison, speaks to **Ashleigh Fehrenbach** about her career path, law reform and whom she looks up to in the legal industry. Ashleigh is a Senior Associate at RPC in London in the IP and Technology team and currently on a secondment at Meta. Prior to working in London, Ashleigh worked at MinterEllison and Addisons in Sydney. She is a board member of CAMLA, co-editor of the CLB and outgoing Chair of the NSW Young Lawyers Communications, Entertainment and Technology Committee. She also likes to run incredibly long distances.

ANJALI NADARADJANE: Hi Ashleigh, thanks so much for this. It's great to hear about your journey so far. What does a typical day look like for you?

ASHLEIGH FEHRENBACH: I cycle into work, high fiving myself on arrival every day for surviving London in morning peak hour. I've recently started a secondment at Meta (formerly, Facebook), so for the moment it's a lot of calls and meetings with Metamates around the globe, corresponding with external counsel on content complaints and disputes, along with constantly looking up a seemingly never-ending list of acronyms on Meta's Wiki page. Online content regulation is going through a real transformation throughout Europe and the UK, as well as Australia of course. In short, it's an exciting time to be a lawyer in this space. I've been going into my firm (RPC)'s office regularly, which has been great. The pandemic demonstrated what is possible with virtual work environments. However, it also made me value those in-person, daily connections that only happen when you are in the same space as your colleagues. Of course, it helps that I work with a really great team. I finish the day with a run and usually end up reviewing articles for the much beloved Communications Law Bulletin and sounding out ideas for the next edition.

ANJALI: 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?

ASHLEIGH: I didn't grow up necessarily wanting to be a lawyer. For a long time, I thought I'd like to be a journalist, looking up to people like Betsy Wade and, closer to home, Leigh Sales. That changed when I studied media law at university, which quickly became my favourite subject. It was then that I realised there was a much broader array of paths to take as a lawyer as opposed to only corporate law, which I felt I wouldn't thrive at. I interviewed with boutique Sydney firm, Addisons. I was asked if I'd like to take on the workstream of a junior IP and disputes solicitor who had just moved on - I jumped at the chance. From there I worked for a fantastic partner, Karen Hayne, acting for exciting global brands on both IP advisory and litigation

matters. I completed my summer clerkship and didn't look back. Since then, I've remained in the IP and disputes space, now with an added focus on tech matters and working in London.

That being said, just because you identify a core area of the law that you enjoy early on doesn't mean that you shouldn't say yes to other opportunities along the way. In my third year of being admitted, I was invited to go on exchange at a law firm in Costa Rica. That was one of the most fulfilling and interesting experiences I've had - being surrounded by brilliant multilingual lawyers at a Spanish speaking firm, in a tiny but very exotic country. When my firm at the time, MinterEllison, was selected to work on the Royal Commission into misconduct in the banking, superannuation and financial services industry for a number of clients, I put my hand up to be involved. As a result, I was immersed in a mammoth investigation into the world of financial services (a new sector for me) where I worked with some excellent lawyers from other offices, who became fantastic mentors and friends. Later on, when I was asked to go on a secondment with the consumer legal team at Optus, again I said yes. Working in-house at a large telco was an incredible experience. I worked across a hugely varied workstream, with crossovers on privacy, consumer law, IP, competition, regulatory and general commercial queries. I worked closely with different business teams (importantly - not just with lawyers!). As a result, I came to better understand what it meant to sit in the client's shoes.

Saying yes when those opportunities came my way may have veered me away from doing only IP and disputes work. However, each taught me invaluable lessons and broadened my experiences as a lawyer. I'm grateful for that.

ANJALI: What's the best work-related advice you've ever received?

ASHLEIGH: Always ask - what problem is the client trying to solve? Sometimes we too readily jump into analysis mode before understanding why someone has had to engage legal advice. Get the context first,



Ashleigh Fehrenbach

then dive into the analysis. Another excellent piece of advice I received was from the first partner I worked for. Not only did she have an incredible memory but a fabulous (sometimes terrifying) eye for detail. She instilled in me the importance of immersing yourself in that detail (especially early on in your career) but making sure you come up for air to see the big picture. This was incredibly important advice throughout my first few years of practice when I was involved in a number of Federal Court disputes with long, complicated histories.

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

ASHLEIGH: My grandmothers. I never had the chance to meet either of them and would love to hear more about their lives, their influences and what it was like growing up in a time when women didn't vote, and were only just starting to attend university and turn their minds to the possibility of being a lawyer. They both would have experienced so much change throughout their lives. I'd also like to find out which of them I can blame for my unruly curly hair.

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

ASHLEIGH: Moving jurisdictions in the middle of a pandemic to study is certainly up there. I loved my work and networks in Sydney, but always had an international move (namely London) in the back of my mind from when I was at university. When an offer to study a post-graduate diploma in intellectual property law and practice at Oxford came through the door, I knew it was something I couldn't pass up, despite it perhaps not being the easiest time to pack up and move across the globe.

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

ASHLEIGH: Cultivate your networks and tap into them. I don't just mean networks within your own firm or organisation. Whilst some of my closest friends are people I've worked with in private practice, as lawyers we are lucky to have a multitude of professional organisations that we can get involved with. NSW Young Lawyers (in particular, the Communications, Entertainment and Technology (Committee) and CAMLA were instrumental for me in finding my way early on as a lawyer and connecting with passionate, exciting people. You can learn

so much from people in your networks. It can also lead you to working on interesting projects and initiatives outside your day job as a lawyer. One project I particularly enjoyed was organising "CET-Up" - the CET Committee's 6 month mentoring program which set up junior lawyers and law students with more senior practitioners across the communications, entertainment and tech law sectors.

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

ASHLEIGH: There are so many, but one who stands out is Ruth Bader Ginsberg. To me, she represents courage, intelligence, poise, and persistence. Ruth's ability to navigate

feminism, public policy and justice with so much dedication and passion is something I truly admire. She was someone who was focussed on helping others and working towards a better future.

ANJALI: How do you unplug from work?

ASHLEIGH: Music and running. My mum introduced me to running early on and after some success in high school and university, I started focussing more on distance running. I've always enjoyed pushing myself - running most days and plugging into a favourite album makes me happy and allows me to switch off from work.

Shelley Scott

Barrister at PG Hely Chambers

Anna Kretowicz, member of the CAMLA Young Lawyers Committee, sits down with **Shelley Scott**, barrister-at-law (admitted to the Bar in 2018) at PG Hely Chambers in Sydney, to talk about what it's like being a woman at the Bar in 2022. Completing a BA/LLB with Distinction, Shelley began her career at MinterEllison, where she worked as a Senior Associate for just over 10 years in their litigation team. Pursuing her interests, she was called to the Bar in 2018 and has been developing a strong commercial practice ever since. She has a particular interest in media law - having been seconded earlier in her career to the ABC - but also practises in areas including white collar crime, bankruptcy and insolvency and corporations law.

ANNA KRETOWICZ: Thanks very much for talking to me today, Shelley, for our special issue of the CAMLA Bulletin for International Women's Day 2022. You were called to the Bar relatively recently, in 2018, after spending around 10 years as a solicitor at MinterEllison. Did you always want to work as a barrister? If so, what did you do to position yourself to do that? But if not, how did your career or life decisions lead you to it?

SHELLEY SCOTT: Thanks Anna, it's great to speak with you and to be part of the IWD edition.

As to your question, not really. I got a summer clerkship at a law firm and settled in litigation. I was lucky enough to work on a Royal Commission with a lot of talented barristers for almost two years. During that time, I found myself doing some of their work: drafting submissions, drafting questions for cross-examination and instructing at hearings. I got a taste for it and there was no going back.

ANNA: What does a typical day look like for you now?

SHELLEY: No day is typical for me! COVID has really changed the way that I work; I do a lot more from home than I used to. I might have a series of witness conferences by Zoom, or a telephone or Zoom hearing, or I might speak to a silk that I am working

with about the preparation of one of our matters. Or else I am just doing chambers work; drafting and researching.

ANNA: What is the best work-related advice you've ever received?

SHELLEY: Work on your attention to detail. A lot of junior lawyers (myself included) do not have good attention to detail. It is a learned skill. I worked hard at improving my attention to detail and it has paid dividends throughout my career.

ANNA: That's great advice, I think I'll have to note that one down for myself... but a more important question, perhaps, is how do you unplug from work?

SHELLEY: I play netball and I love it!

ANNA: The 2022 International Women's Day campaign theme is #BreakTheBias. What does this mean to you and how would you suggest this is implemented in our readers' work and personal lives?

SHELLEY: I'll give you an example.

My best friend is the General Counsel of a listed company. Recently, she asked my advice on picking a barrister from the list of barristers that her solicitors had given her. I looked at her list of six very accomplished older male barristers and I told her that all would do a good job, but I queried why



Shelley Scott

there was no woman on the list. She was shocked. She hadn't noticed the absence of a woman (or two or three) on the list.

She told me later that she contacted the partner at the law firm and asked him why he had not included any women on the list for her consideration. Sadly, he tried to justify the absence of women on the list, but even so, the most important step was getting her to recognise her own unconscious bias.

I would encourage your readers to ask questions when they too are faced with the absence of women from any part of their lives; challenging the bias is the first step to breaking it.

ANNA: And to finish with a fun one, if you could have dinner with any woman (living or passed, real or fictional), who would it be and why?

SHELLEY: Definitely Ruth Bader Ginsburg, so I can ask her why she didn't retire when Obama had the chance to pick her replacement, and if she accepts that her failure to retire when the Democrats had the chance to pick her replacement may just have been her worst decision in an otherwise storied career.