

# Charlotte Olsen

## Legal Counsel, National Rugby League

**Tara-Kate Taylor**, Law Graduate at McCullough Robertson Lawyers, chats with **Charlotte Olsen**, Legal Counsel at National Rugby League, about Charlotte's career and International Women's Day. Having always had an interest in sports media, Charlotte transitioned from private practice to an in-house role at the National Rugby League in 2021. Charlotte holds a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) and Bachelor of Communication and Media Studies (Distinction) and advises on a broad range of commercial, media and intellectual property issues. Outside of work, Charlotte is an avid sports fan who participates in swimming, netball and AFL.

**TARA-KATE TAYLOR:** Charlotte, thank you for taking the time to talk with me about your experiences in the Australian media industry. To start off with, could you please tell us about yourself and the type of work you do at the National Rugby League?

**CHARLOTTE OLSEN:** Absolutely! I am 27 years old, live in the Sutherland Shire and play a lot of (potentially too much) sport, including swimming, netball and AFL. I completed a Bachelor of Laws (Honours)/ Bachelor of Communication and Media Studies (Distinction) back in 2017, and actually wrote my Honours thesis on the efficiency of section 115A of the Copyright Act (as it was back then) in protecting sports broadcasts from illegal streaming sites. So sport and media has always been an interest of mine!

I am currently Legal Counsel at the National Rugby League and provide legal advice to the NRL business across a variety of areas including commercial contracting (sponsorships, marketing, media, services agreements to name a few), ad hoc legal advice to internal business units, advising on intellectual property related matters and managing the game's trade mark portfolio, policy development as well as risk, dispute and integrity related matters. It really is a very varied role where I interact with the game's different stakeholders which includes affiliated states and NRL/NRLW clubs. No two days are ever the same, and it is amazing to contribute to the governing



body that brings rugby league to our community, both at the grassroots and elite level.

**TARA-KATE:** I understand you previously worked in private practice, what drew you to your current role in sports media and how have you navigated what is largely a male dominated field?

**CHARLOTTE:** Having always been involved in sport since a very young age, it made sense that I would end up working in an area that I love. My first stint in the sports law world was when I worked for Football Federation Australia (now Football Australia), and I knew then that it was 100% for me. I worked as a commercial lawyer and then an intellectual property and technology lawyer, which assisted me in establishing a good foundation and understanding of the different areas of law that were transferrable to an in-house legal role. Working as Legal Counsel for the NRL has always been a dream job for me, and I am very humbled and privileged to have landed that role in the early stages of my career.

In relation to your comment about navigating a largely male dominated field, I think there has definitely been a positive shift over the past years not only from a sportsperson point of view, but also in high level sports executive and management related roles. It shouldn't matter whether you are female or male in the sporting world or any other industry – everyone has something to bring to the table and as long as you are passionate and good at what you do, that is all that really matters in my opinion!

**TARA-KATE:** With the increased investment given to female sports and its growing popularity, where do you think women's professional sport is headed from here?

**CHARLOTTE:** Women's professional sport is currently in an exciting growth phase. I think women's professional sport is positively influencing the younger generation of female sports stars and sporting codes should continue to invest more and more into women's sporting growth to ensure its sustainability into the future. This will include exploring what works and what doesn't from a fan engagement and participation point of view, and understanding and nurturing young female athletes at the grassroots level, while also striving for equality at the elite level. It is super exciting watching this space grow!

**TARA-KATE:** Following on from that, are there particular initiatives you have implemented at the NRL (or are in the process of implementing and can share) that you think others in the sports and media space could learn from in terms of equalising the playing field?

**CHARLOTTE:** The NRL has worked and continues to work really hard at building our women's game from the bottom up. What this means is that we are investing in our future female rugby league super stars at the grassroots level.

NRLW commenced in 2018 post the Jillaroos World Cup win in 2017, which was a major stepping stone for women's rugby league in Australia. There are

now elite offerings for female players in NRLW, Women's State of Origin and at an international level. The expansion of NRLW in 2021 saw the competition increase to six teams, which meant the number of elite female rugby league players increased from 88 to 144. The minimum player payment also increased by 100% from 2020 to 2021. There is also an under-19s Women's State of Origin, giving elite level opportunity to the next generation of NRLW stars.

Not only are we investing in female rugby league players, but we are also investing in our female coaches and officials. The Women In League Officiating Program helps develop female officials through state competition and, eventually into the NRLW and NRL systems. This year will also see the commencement of the Female Coaching Mentoring Program, where female coaches are given the opportunity to learn from some of the best in the game to develop their skills and experience and take the next step in their coaching careers.

There are still many things to be done in order to equalise the playing field, but it is awesome to see more female sport (including NRLW) on our TV screens, as well as the rapid increase in supporters, spectators and participants watching and enjoying female sports.

**TARA-KATE:** What are the biggest legal or industry challenges you foresee for the sports entertainment industry over the next few years?

**CHARLOTTE:** I hope that this is something that we won't be dealing with for much longer, but the introduction of a global pandemic meant sporting organisations had to rethink and re-strategize how we deliver sport. It meant that sporting organisations had to navigate keeping their players/competitors as safe as possible, while also continuing to promote and provide the consumption of sport to Australians. I know that, for me, during the pandemic the Olympic games and watching sporting matches on TV was something that brought me joy and hope of getting back to some sort of 'normal', and I think it really showed the power sport has in bringing people together. Continuing to be adaptive to change is something the sports entertainment industry will need to continue to embrace.

Technology is also continuing to advance and change as the years go by, and the way people are consuming sport is expanding. Social media and live streaming services are used by a predominant part of individuals that consume and participate in the sports entertainment industry. COVID arguably also pushed some sports to explore the potential

and value of e-sports perhaps sooner than may have been forecast. Technology advancement also includes athlete and game enhancing mechanisms. Sporting codes are likely to be presented with new ways to track data and enhance game flow and performance. Consideration will need to be given as to where these sorts of technologies sit within the sport entertainment industry.

**TARA-KATE:** Is there anything you have learned through your career that you would like to give as advice to your younger self?

**CHARLOTTE:** I think I would say this:

*"Trust the process, believe that you are good enough to reach your career goals and most importantly, just be yourself. There will be moments where you aren't sure whether you are actually ever going to achieve your career goals and aspirations. However, if you stay motivated and above all else, passionate about what you do, and put in the effort to continue learning everyday (because you won't ever stop learning in this industry), then the rest will simply fall into place. Also, continue networking, meet new people and maintain current connections!"*

**TARA-KATE:** Which female sports star would you love to have dinner with, and why?

**CHARLOTTE:** It would definitely be Cate Campbell. Swimming has always been a huge part of my life so there is an immediate interest there, but watching Cate go to four Olympics is pretty incredible. I think Cate's career also shows the highs and lows of being such a high-profile elite female athlete, and the immense pressure our sport stars are often under. In particular, I would love to sit down with her (perhaps over a pizza and a glass of red wine?) and recount a fond memory I have of her (sounds odd to start but hang in there and you will understand why).

I was glued to my computer screen (when I should have been listening to my teacher in my Animal Law class...) during the 100m freestyle final at Rio, and I remember feeling completely and utterly shattered for Cate at the end of that race. But equally, that moment made me like her even more as an athlete and as a person, as she then somehow picked herself up, vocalised her growth and intent to simply enjoy the Tokyo Olympics, and she did exactly that, while contributing to arguably some of the greatest female relay performances we have seen in the pool. I would love to ask her how she shifted her mentality and gained a new perspective on swimming. Because for me, that's sports star quality stuff right there. Equally, potentially being the nation's first five-time Olympic swimmer is an astonishing concept to be contemplating. I have no doubt that, like me, there are other individuals in the sporting world that can relate to and look up to someone like Cate.

**TARA-KATE:** Thanks once again for your time, Charlotte. On behalf of CAMLA's readers, we appreciate your insight and advice.

# CAMLA CUP TRIVIA NIGHT

THURSDAY 12TH MAY 2022\*  
DOORS: 6:00PM - STARTS: 6:30PM

SKY PHOENIX  
WESTFIELD SYDNEY  
188 PITT STREET

\$700 PER TABLE OF TEN  
\$70 PER PERSON  
DRINKS PACKAGES ALSO AVAILABLE

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\*DATE MAY BE POSTPONED DUE TO COVID 19 DEVELOPMENTS AND PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS

