

Michelle Caredes

Senior Corporate Counsel at Paramount Network Ten

Dominic Keenan, lawyer at Allens, speaks with **Michelle Caredes**, Senior Corporate Counsel at Network Ten and Paramount ANZ (formerly ViacomCBS ANZ) to discuss her thoughts on International Women's Day, her perspective on a career in law and advice for future lawyers.

Michelle is the Senior Corporate Counsel at Paramount ANZ and is responsible for the management of a broad range of commercial legal matters including data management and privacy, technology and distribution arrangements for the company's channels and services (including 10, 10 Peach, 10 Bold, 10 Shake, 10 Play, 10 Speaks and Paramount+) and also works on sports rights agreements. Prior to this role at Network Ten, Michelle was Legal Counsel at Nine Digital (commencing back when it was ninemsn) and she began her career in private practice at Corrs Chambers Westgarth focussing on IP, advertising and technology law. She has always held a strong passion for the media and entertainment industries.



DOMINIC KEENAN: Michelle, thanks so much for taking the time to speak with us today. I know your practice is broad and you work on a wide variety of matters. What does a typical day look like for you?

MICHELLE CAREDES: The wide scope of matters in my practice area ensures there are rarely two days that are similar... and that variety is what I love about my role.

Initially, *after* breakfast (the most important meal of the day!), I review emails and set the day's priorities. That said, in a dynamic company operating in a dynamic industry, priorities can change quickly! This is particularly so as my practice supports a diverse range of business teams including Digital, Sales, Technology, Data & Insights, Sport, Communications, and Operations teams.

My typical day is generally spent partly in meetings and partly 'doing the work'. The meetings are predominantly with internal clients discussing their legal queries and proposed arrangements. There may also be meetings to negotiate a contract with a counterparty. The challenge is preserving enough time in the day to review and draft documents. There may also be calls with colleagues in the legal team. I'm lucky to be a member of a collaborative team that, despite us all currently working separately from our homes, is always available to each other to bounce ideas off as may be needed.

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

MICHELLE: It's a little cliché... but "outside your comfort zone is where the magic happens". Basically, to trust your own skills and abilities, and push yourself out of your comfort zone. I think staying curious about unfamiliar topics, taking on a variety of opportunities and giving them your best efforts (while it can be daunting at times) helps to build your resilience and confidence.

DOMINIC: Did you always want to work in media or technology law? If so, what did you do to position yourself to get to the role you are in now? If not, how did your career path lead you here?

MICHELLE: I've been interested in the media and entertainment industry from an early age and was lucky enough to enjoy my high school work experience program at the Nine Network. However, I'd be lying if I suggested that the path to this point was linear. As I always had a deep interest in Intellectual Property, for a time I thought I would use my combined Science/Law degree in the field of biotechnology patents... Spoiler: that didn't eventuate. Early in my career in my private practice years I practised in an Intellectual Property, Technology and Competition team which provided a strong foundation and experience in practising IP law, advertising law and technology law. After a few varied secondment experiences, the shift in-house in the media industry was very appealing and fortunately my experience was well suited for practising law in this industry. My first in-house legal role was at ninemsn (as it was then) and later was known as Nine Digital. A few years later I joined the Legal team at Network 10, now Paramount ANZ.

DOMINIC: What recent events in the Australian media or privacy law landscape most affect your organisation and role?

MICHELLE: The release of the Privacy Act review discussion paper in October 2021 is a key development in privacy law reform. It proposed wide-ranging and significant privacy reforms that would apply on an economy-wide basis. As I advise on arrangements concerning our digital services, data management and privacy law compliance, any significant privacy law changes will require assessments of, and changes to, various technology arrangements and processes.

Also, policy makers in various markets are considering regulation of AdTech and, separately, the big technology companies are making changes to the way their platforms process data (for example, Apple's updates last year to its mobile devices' operating system made fundamental changes to Apple's AdTech ecosystem). To assess the impacts of such significant technology changes proposed by the big technology companies, I need to maintain a current understanding of how data is processed by the big technology companies that are relevant to Ten's business - that can definitely be challenging!

DOMINIC: What energises you about your work?

MICHELLE: My colleagues. As I mentioned, I'm lucky enough to work with colleagues from across a broad range of business teams. I'm briefed by people that are deeply passionate about their specific areas of work and genuinely enjoy explaining relevant details to you (whether it be UX designs or data architecture as examples), their enthusiasm is contagious and inspiring as we collaborate and develop solutions.

DOMINIC: What's a professional risk that you've taken?

MICHELLE: When I was in private practice, I was offered the opportunity to relocate interstate for a few months on short notice (less than a week) and commence a full-time secondment at a beer company. There seemed to be many reasons against agreeing to take up this opportunity. While the company was the firm's client, I had not previously worked with them and had no understanding of their particular business or legal needs or priorities; it meant handing over carriage of all my current matters and clients; and there was the obvious

disruption to personal life. Also, I don't drink beer. Just don't like the taste of it... and I don't know a pint from a schooner or a middy! So, if I agreed to this secondment, in many respects I was going to be a 'fish out of water'. Despite these apparent drawbacks, I was just curious enough to follow my gut and say yes to that opportunity. As it turns out, I loved my time on that secondment, I learned a lot and within a week or so I found that I was feeling passionate about the projects the company was working on... that, as in-house counsel, I was helping the company progress and achieve. The absurdity of me, hater-of-beer, feeling fulfilled by beer-related legal matters was a revelation. Taking that risk on that secondment experience was indeed worth it as it helped me clarify that I wanted to make the move in-house.

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

MICHELLE: An incredibly hard question to answer and I'll likely change my answer day-to-day... so today's answer is Iris Apfel. She was an interior designer, launched and ran an international fabric manufacturing company with her husband and became well known later in life for her distinct, eclectic personal fashion style. In 2005, Iris was 85 years old and at that time relatively unknown when the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York dedicated a show to her collection of clothing and jewellery. After having lived such a long and rich life since 1921, she would have many stories to share, and it'd be interesting to hear her perspective on so many issues. Plus, I think her vivacious approach to life would be inspiring to be around... even if just for one meal.

DOMINIC: 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?

MICHELLE: In order to "break" the bias, we need to first identify and acknowledge the bias or stereotype that may be at play in a situation and then call it out whenever it occurs to try to 'break' it. Often people are not aware of their bias in their conduct and are not aware there's a problem with what they are doing. So, even if it feels uncomfortable to you, calling it out can be helpful to them.

This theme also suggests that, on a personal level, you should take time to reflect and assess whether you may be holding any self-limiting beliefs about yourself. If you have been hesitating to try something (or even whether to contact someone in the industry to ask for a coffee or chat)... truly question what is holding you back?

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

MICHELLE: Well, happily, this is a very hard question to answer. I feel privileged to be able to say there are lots of impressive and admirable female colleagues (current and former), counterparties with whom I have negotiated and external advisers with whom I have worked. There are also various inspiring women who are leaders in their field who I have heard speak at various (pre-Covid in-person) functions ranging from technology industry leaders and media agency leaders to General Counsels. Those women who I particularly admire are authentic and they find time to encourage and champion others.

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

MICHELLE: I think there are three things I would say to the next generation of female leaders:

1. Stay curious and ask questions.
2. There are no wasted conversations. You can learn something from every conversation (even those that you wish to immediately forget!).

3. Also... be comfortable with change because this industry is relentlessly changing at a fast pace!

DOMINIC: Michelle, that's all of the questions we have for today. Thanks so much for being a part of this year's International Women's Day edition of the CLB! It has been great to speak with you and hear your insights.

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