



JENNIE WILD

Q&A

Jennie's practice is a balance of international arbitration and domestic litigation. Jennie is ranked as a leading junior by Chambers & Partners and the Legal 500 in Construction, Energy, International Arbitration and the Middle East, and was recently awarded "Construction Junior of the Year" for 2024 at the Legal 500 MENA Awards.

You were recently awarded “Construction Junior of the Year” at the Legal 500 MENA awards, congratulations! You have been working on cases in the Middle East for a long time now, what do you enjoy about the work in that region?

Thank you! I was very fortunate to be brought into some big cases in the region early in my career, and my practice has grown from there. The disputes are often sizable and complicated. As a result, I have had to dive right in to work out what the issues are (often not those first presented) and how best to prove my client’s case. I have spent a lot of time with solicitors, the technical experts, factual witnesses – often experts their own right – and digging through documents. After hours spent around a whiteboard and laptop you develop a fantastic technical and factual understanding of a given project (perhaps the airport you recently flew into or the solar plant that powers the lights above you). I have learnt so much and developed strong friendships. Much like the presentation of the disputes, my award is very much the product of a team effort! I really enjoy turning the learning into a concise and persuasive presentation of the client’s case: winning a point because you have got the technical arguments right, found the key progress report, fitted the arguments into the legal framework and made it easy for the Tribunal to digest.

I also enjoy learning about the history and culture of the region. On one of my first trips to Dubai, after a long day of conferences, Richard Harding KC suggested that I made an evening trip to the Al Fahidi Fort. I confess, I had room service and an early night in mind, but I made the trip and was so glad I did. It became the start of many more – the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha is amongst my favourites. The fort visit sparked an interest in the region, which I believe has furthered my understanding of the local laws and principles too.

Before your career at the Bar, you spent time in Melbourne, including as an associate to the Honourable Justice Hargrave of the Supreme Court of Victoria. Can you tell us about that experience / what did you learn in that role that has helped you as a barrister?

I added a year to my undergraduate law degree to study at Melbourne University and gained a “with” (Law with Australian Law LLB Hons). After graduating, I returned to Melbourne for three years and gained legal experience alongside the tan: working for the Australian Wheat Board on the fallout from the Oil-for-Food scandal in Iraq, at the Victorian Government Solicitor’s Office (mainly working on the Royal Bushfire Commission) and then for Hargrave J. As an associate, my tasks



included sitting in on hearings, being a sounding board for the judge before and after court and helping him to write judgments. Facing outwards in the court room is quite a different experience to being an advocate. I learnt how important it was to consider the person you are directing your submissions to and the need to objectively consider how your opponent’s arguments might be received. Often parties would, effectively, throw material at the judge and expect him to unravel it all to work out the issues and find an answer, which was not effective advocacy. I believe I also developed a strong poker face!

What guidance would you offer law students aspiring for a career at the commercial Bar?

In recent years I have sat on our Pupillage Committee and Fair Recruitment Committee (established to consider and reform our recruitment practices in an attempt to be more inclusive, diverse and, hopefully, fair).

My first tip is: do your research and start it early. I suggest students look at the CVs of, say, the 10 most junior members of a chambers they might be interested in. Try to form a view as to the type of qualifications and skills they had when applying and consider whether you match up. If not, what you can do about it? Do you need to study harder to bring your grades up? Do you need to volunteer at your local law centre this summer to gain more experience? Should you consider working for a year after university to gain legal skills and knowledge? However, chambers are not looking for clones. The best barristers do not all come from the same mould. The task is to identify qualifications and skills rather than institutions and specific experiences.

Secondly, students should consider how they might be unique. Once you have acquired the basic qualifications and

skills, try to think about what makes you stand out. Keating Chambers offers a first interview to about 50 candidates and a second interview to about 12. They all will have satisfied the basics. For example, have you gained impressive marks whilst holding down three jobs? Have you played sport to a high level? Did you run a charity event for a local school? Or have you taken a hobby to the next level? But most importantly: what skills do such experiences evidence (see below)?

Finally, at every stage of the process, I suggest students have regard to the skills and attributes chambers are looking for and explain how they meet a given criterion, rather than simply listing qualifications and experiences. Don’t leave markers guessing how your cycling trip across Europe evidences eg an ability to work in teams, or resilience etc. Rather, explain why you believe you have demonstrated the particular skill or attribute. Keating Chambers publishes a lot of information about its selection criteria and mark schemes to assist.

Outside of the law, what are your other interests or passions?

I really enjoy yoga. I find it a good way to leave behind the stresses of the day. I also enjoy art – going to galleries and working on my own pieces. However, it is very hard to find time for it these days, perhaps primarily due to my third interest/passion, which is the most important by far: my two gorgeous children!