



McR

Connect

Alumni newsletter

Issue two  
April 2017

# Welcome

## From our Chairman of Partners



Welcome to the second edition of McRConnect.

Pleasingly we have had a busy start to the year, with significant increases in activity levels across most practice and industry groups and opportunities in play for others. In addition, with the arrival of our CEO Brad McCosker in October last year, we have been hard at work developing our strategic plan, including how we 'go to market' and where we intend to focus our efforts to drive profitable growth in the medium to long term.

Essentially, our 'go to market' industry approach seeks to align our strategic focus with our expertise and existing industry footprint. In that vein our refreshed industry offering captures renewables, expands agribusiness to include fast moving consumer goods, tourism and what we are currently calling IPITC (intellectual property, information technology and competition). In addition we will continue to leverage our strong referral network internationally as well as consolidate and extend our push into regional Queensland and New South Wales.

It is an exciting time for McR as we seek to do things differently and create opportunities for our business, our clients and our community. Certainly an air of energy and enthusiasm was evident at our recent Town Hall meetings in Brisbane and Sydney when the firm came together to discuss our new strategy.

In the coming editions of McRConnect we will explore in greater depth the strategy we intend to pursue across each of these industries. This edition I encourage you to read Belinda Breakspear's piece on the opportunities we intend to capture in

the fast moving consumer goods sector. Belinda is one of our newer partners and, given her expertise in intellectual property and trade marks, is perfectly positioned to head up our strategic push into this growing area.

Equally I hope you will enjoy reflecting, as much as I did, on the stories within this edition that pay homage to the long-term members of our McR family. A feature like this reminds us of the rich history and deep friendships and connections that have been forged within our firm over the years. With almost a quarter of our people having been with us for more than 10 years I have no doubt you will enjoy reading these personal tributes and anecdotes penned for our long-time friends and colleagues.

On the other end of the scale, I would also like to welcome our 2017 graduates to the firm (pictured on page 7). Our graduate campaign is the single biggest recruitment process we undertake each year and it remains the most significant way we continue to grow our firm. Welcoming our graduates provides yet another opportunity to be generous in guiding the newest members of our team as they embark on their quest to deliver quality client service every day.

All the best,

**Dominic McGann**

Brisbane | Sydney | Melbourne | Newcastle

[www.mccullough.com.au](http://www.mccullough.com.au)

Lawyers | **McCullough  
Robertson**

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From Louise

# Our alumni champion



Welcome to our second edition of McRConnect!

Thank you to all our readers who took the time to message us following the release of our first edition in December. It was great to hear how much you enjoyed the photographs of our newly refurbished offices as well as those of our former colleagues and friends taken at our alumni cocktail party in October last year. It was equally great to receive your feedback and suggestions as to the sort of stories you want to read about in McRConnect so please, keep your emails coming.

Excitingly our membership continues to grow as we reignite connections through our events and social media networks. Next month we will host the first of our 'coffee catch ups' which will hopefully bring even more of our former colleagues into the fold. Please stay tuned for further details about where and when you can drop in for a chat and a coffee 'on the house'.

As we continue to tell your stories, this issue we caught up with Michelle Thomsen who started her career as an articled clerk at McR and now works for Bank of Queensland as Group Executive, General Counsel & Company Secretary. We also enjoyed chatting with Melinda Kastanya who returned to us in 2015 after a stint as legal counsel at Virgin Australia. Both Michelle and Melinda have interesting stories to tell and I encourage you to have a read on pages 10 and 11.

I hope you enjoy this issue of McRConnect and I look forward to seeing many of you at our first coffee catch up in May.

Louise Horrocks

## Diary dates 2017

9  
May

### Property Insights: Why Brisbane?

Property prices in Sydney and Melbourne are heating up but Brisbane is emerging as an attractive investment option showing more affordable prices and higher rental yields. In addition, with a new wave of apartments coming online now could be an opportune time to buy. Join us for an insightful and informative discussion featuring guest speaker, Guan Lim Chairman of Asia Pacific Real Estate Association.

**Venue:** McCullough Robertson, Brisbane  
**Time:** 4.30pm for 5.00pm start  
**RSVP:** [Register](#) by 5 May

### Let's get affordable

Governments are under mounting pressure to reduce expenditure and deliver social outcomes in partnership with the private sector.

Partnering with The Urban Developer, this event features leading social infrastructure lawyer Heather Watson and other industry experts who will explore current and future opportunities for private developers in the affordable housing sector and outline business models, planning frameworks and legal structures that developers can consider to unlock greater value.

[Click here to register.](#)

Sydney

17  
May

Melbourne

23  
May

Brisbane

31  
May

### Employment Relations Conference

Led by McCullough Robertson's team of experts, the 18th Annual Employment Relations Conference covers all the latest developments in employment law and industrial relations to ensure you maximise productivity and minimise the risk of employment related claims. The conference is a must for all executives, in-house legal counsel, human resources and employee relations professionals.

**Venue:** Stamford Plaza, Brisbane  
**Enquiries:** Donna White on 07 3233 8988

8  
Sept

14  
Sept

### Construction Law Conference

With a packed one day program focussing on legal and commercial issues facing projects, the conference is tailored to individuals acting in a commercial and legal capacity. We will focus on the main issues that are likely to affect projects in the coming years, providing in-depth insights on every aspect of the project lifecycle, from procurement and project development through to contract negotiation and dispute avoidance.

**Venue:** Rydges Southbank, Brisbane  
**Enquiries:** Carla van den Hoorn on 07 3233 8883

# McR milestones

Over the next two editions of McRConnect we will feature our colleagues who have celebrated significant service milestones with McR. In this edition we feature a selection of those who celebrated their anniversaries in 2016, acknowledging their achievements and contribution to our firm over many years. Stay tuned for the August edition, which will feature our colleagues who reached milestones in 2016 and early 2017.



## Sam Ryalls, 25 years

### Started at McR...

in 1990 as a secretary

### Currently works as...

a Communications Coordinator in Business Development and Marketing

Sam Ryalls (then Sam Hogan) started at McR in 1990 following a short stint with a suburban law firm. She worked as a secretary in the Business Law and Revenue Group (or BLAR as it was then known), and was a central figure in this group for 13 years.

In 2005 Sam took maternity leave to have her daughter Zoe and returned the following year, working three days per week in a newly created role. Those that have followed this now well-trodden path have been inspired by Sam for embracing this opportunity and providing an example that others could follow.

Sam's new role as 'special projects administrator' in the Business and Revenue Group involved everything from business and event planning to secretarial coordination. Within time her role evolved and she eventually moved into Business Development and Marketing where she now works four days per week as a Communications Coordinator.

To Sam's credit she chose to juggle her already hectic work and family life with study, successfully completing her Bachelor of Communication from University of Southern Queensland in 2016.

### Reflections...

*"Sam has and continues to have a strong commitment to McR and our collective success, having always been willing to do whatever is necessary to support*

*and assist. Her gentle and friendly disposition means that working with her has never been anything but a pleasure, no matter how hectic it might sometimes be.*

*McR owes Sam a great deal of thanks for her contribution to our success. In particular the Commercial and Tax, Tax, EPC and BDM teams and I should be forever grateful for her 25 years of service."*

**Partner Damien Clarke**

**Find out more about our long term team members by clicking on their name.**



**Dominic McGann, Chairman, 20 years**



**Heather Watson, Partner, 10 years**



**Linda O'Leary, Paralegal, 10 years**

Find out more about our long term team members by clicking on their name.



**Cameron Dean**, Partner, 10 years



**Linda Mavity**, Mailroom Team Leader, 10 years



**Frances Fredriksen**, Senior Associate, 10 years



## Sue Kelly, 25 years

### Started at McR...

in 1981 as a secretary, returned in 1992 to undertake project work

### Currently works as...

a receptionist in the Brisbane office

Sue Kelly's 25 year tenure follows a previous stint of six years, having initially started with us 36 years ago and leaving in the late 1980s to raise her two children before returning to us some years later.

Sue came on board in 1981 when McR was a team of only 50. Interviewed by then Office Manager Gordon Muir, Sue had just moved to Brisbane from her home town of Gatton, where she had worked at a local law firm. She commenced as a secretary, working with former partners Mike Cunningham and Kerry Prior, when electric typewriters, carbon paper and shorthand were tools of the trade.

Sue left in 1987 to have her son Brayden, returning shortly thereafter as a relief secretary after bumping into a former colleague at Donna White's wedding and discussing part-time options. She

continued in this role until she left to have her daughter Shae in 1990.

In 1992 she returned two days per week, working with alumni Jan Neish on a 2.5 year project to collate documents held in the wills and safe custody records and liaise with clients about ongoing storage. In 1995 Sue moved into her current role on reception, although the role looked very different back then. Using an old fashioned switchboard (to transfer phone calls), Sue was required to memorise every extension number...!

### Reflections...

*"A bit of advice that I received along the way is that you never get a second chance to make a first impression. To my mind, someone who would never need a second chance is Sue Kelly.*

*Throughout my 20 years at McR, Sue has been a constant example of exceptional client service.*

*Together with her colleagues on reception, Sue is often the*

*person who provides the first impression of the firm and I have only ever heard words of gratitude and praise from our clients.*

*In addition, whenever I hare through reception, we always say hello to each other and I bound on with an added step in my walk. For my part I am grateful for every one of Sue's years with us and I look forward to her continued good cheer on reception"*

**Chairman of Partners Dominic McGann**

## Making news

# McR named as finalist in prestigious Property Council of Australia awards

We are delighted to be named as a finalist in the Diversity category of the 2017 Property Council of Australia/Rider Levett Bucknall Innovation & Excellence Awards.

McR is the only legal firm and by far the smallest organisation recognised in the category, standing shoulder to shoulder with industry heavyweights Leadlease, Aurecon, GHD, KPMG, Crown Resorts, Arup, Mirvac and Star Entertainment Group. The Moulis Legal Award for Diversity celebrates the positive contribution made by organisations that demonstrate a holistic and long-term commitment to diversity within the property industry.

McR has one of the strongest property practices on the eastern seaboard, advising some of Australia's largest property developers, landlords and funds. It is a great honour to be short-listed for an award in what is recognised as the pre-eminent property industry awards program in Australia.



Award winners will be announced at a Gala Dinner in Sydney on Friday 5 May 2017.

## Diversity podcast

With the support of the Property Council of Australia and Moulis Legal we participated in a series of podcasts to share our collective passion for promoting diversity in the workplace and broader community.

Louise Ferris is our Director of People and Performance and has over 20 years' experience in human resources in the legal services industry. In this podcast, Louise talks about some key diversity initiatives, including our new 'concierge' program as well as some of the pressing issues facing the legal profession – globally and nationally – from mental health to the gender gap we see between men and women at the Bar.

[Listen to the podcast here](#)



## In the media



# PROCTOR

**FEBRUARY 2017, page 11**

## McCullough earns third equality citation

McCullough Robertson Lawyers has received the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation – for the third consecutive year.

The national citation recognises employers adopting leading practices to promote gender equality in the workplace.

McCullough Robertson partner and diversity committee chair Guy Humble said gender equality in the workplace wasn't about ideology or political correctness but economic opportunity.

In the past 12 months the national firm has appointed four new partners to its Brisbane and Sydney offices, all of whom are women.

It has also piloted a program to help its most senior women manage the competing demands of work and family life. During a four-month trial, the firm's 'concierge' service coordinated an insurance claim for building repair, sourced accommodation options, helped plan a first birthday party and carried out various domestic tasks.

## Welcoming our 2017 graduates

On 13 February we welcomed 11 of law's best and brightest to our team through our graduate intake for 2017. Our graduate program represents our single biggest recruitment activity in any given year and remains a significant platform in our growth strategy.

We are renowned for challenging our interns and graduates early in their career and this year has been no exception with our graduates busy developing their technical skills as well as participating in personal and professional development programs including CV building, interview skills, public speaking and networking.

At the end of a busy first week, our graduates let their hair down for a fun and relaxed Friday evening at the Golden Pig cooking school in Newstead. Joined by our 2016 graduates and their supervisors, even the most reluctant cooks in the group enjoyed preparing, cooking and plating up shared entrees.

## Did you know?

Recognising that interns are a major talent pipeline via our graduate recruitment pathway, McR targets students in their pre-penultimate year as opposed to the traditional model of the penultimate year.

An eight week program, delivered over 24 months (rather than a four week program delivered over 12 months) gives students the opportunity to explore a broader spectrum of legal work as well as a stronger base to build meaningful relationships and get to know our people and culture.

Do you know someone who would benefit from our two year internship program? Visit our [Careers](#) page.



(L-R) Nicholas Lindsay, Bronte Shaddock, Patrick Stanhope, Amy Arbuckle, Eloise Jolly, Michael Bidwell, Emma Brown, Kane Robinson, Anna Mott and Jeremy Harrison. Henry Brunskill is absent.

## Matt wins Construction Client Choice Award



Congratulations to Matt Bradbury, one of the Partners in our Construction team who has won a highly contested Client Choice Award for Australia in the construction category.

These global awards, nominated by Corporate Counsel, are reserved for law firms and partners that stand apart for the excellent client care and quality of service they provide. In accepting this award Matt paid tribute to the Construction team, who go above and beyond for their clients each and every day.

The Construction team has the privilege to work on projects across Australia and is currently advising on sites in each State and Territory and in South-East Asia as we follow our clients' expanding operations.



by Belinda Breakspear, Partner



# What's new in FMCG?

*Fuelled by a wide set of technological, social, demographic and economic forces, the fast moving consumer goods sector is experiencing a perfect storm of change. And with demand for legal services set to soar, McR is leveraging its agribusiness background to position itself for the boom.*

Fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) are those retail goods with a short shelf life, either as a result of high consumer demand or because the product deteriorates rapidly. Some FMCG such as meats, fruit and vegetables, dairy products and baked goods are highly perishable. Other goods such as alcohol, toiletries, processed foods, soft drinks and cleaning products, have high turnover rates.

## What are the major forces impacting FMCG?

Technology has never changed at such a fast pace. The 'Internet of Things' has fundamentally changed how consumers shop and will continue to do so over the next 10 years. Coupled with lifestyle changes and increased food choices, customers now have rapidly evolving attitudes towards shopping and most certainly, increased expectations in terms of efficiency, transparency, and the quality of the experience itself.

## Thought leadership

**Download our useful guide** 'Emerging issues for the Australian resources sector in 2017', in which we identify a number of emerging issues where we expect to see further policy development this year, with a specific focus on the resource rich states in Australia.

In terms of manufacturer expectations, suppliers want increased visibility into retail operations and expect new services from retailers including shopper analytics and targeted advertising. Across the supply chain, companies are operating in an increasingly over-saturated and highly competitive sector, giving rise to the trend for industry consolidation and supply chain rationalisation.

For the operators in this sector, this spells an unprecedented need for legal services, including all aspects of corporate, mergers and acquisitions, intellectual property, real estate, competition law and workplace health and safety.

In this environment, our very deliberate strategy over the medium term will be to leverage our strong roots in food and agribusiness and expand our focus from 'paddock to yard' to 'paddock to plate... and the dishwashing liquid'. This means a strategic focus on every step of the supply chain in the agriculture, food and beverage, and FMCG space – growing, processing, manufacturing, packaging, advertising, wholesaling, retailing, exporting and importing. Fast moving consumer services (FMCS) is also a key focus for McR.

Originally founded in rural Queensland as an agribusiness law firm, our in-depth knowledge and strong track record working across the spectrum, including industry associations, cooperatives, family based operators, large public and private companies and international

conglomerates positions us well to pursue opportunities further up the supply chain. We have good cross referral opportunities through our current food and beverage, FMCG and FMCS client base which includes Australian Agricultural Company, Terry White Chemists, Bundaberg Brewed Drinks and Flight Centre Travel Group Limited.

We partner with these clients to build a thorough understanding of their businesses, from their brand strategy to their online activities, so we can provide tailored advice that protects and strengthens their competitive presence in their chosen markets.

## About Belinda Breakspear

*Belinda started at McR in 2004 and was promoted to partner in 2016. She manages the firm's intellectual property and trade mark practice, providing advice on the development of new brands, brand availability, trade mark registration and trade mark enforcement and prosecution in Australia and internationally.*

*Belinda also advises on the transfer and licensing of intellectual property, intellectual property ownership and protection, franchising and privacy. She assists a broad range of clients from start up businesses to publicly listed companies, including a number of well-known brands. Belinda also acts for a number of international law firms.*

Key legislative and policy developments discussed in this guide include:

- Native title – Federal Court decision challenges validity of ILUAs
- Timber Creek native title compensation decision
- Register of foreign ownership of water rights



## Community



At McR we have a strong community focus and recognise that it's not always about business. In 2009 we established the McCullough Robertson Foundation to support and formalise our engagement with our community partners. Today we work closely with more than 180 community partners, organisations and charities across a range of areas.

## Lending a hand to Legacy

In the lead up to Anzac Day our Brisbane office dedicated its monthly dress down day and fundraising morning tea to Legacy, which provides vital services to more than 70,000 families of Australian service men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

Twenty year old nursing and paramedic science student Brianna Anderson attended our morning tea to share with us her deeply moving story about the support Legacy provided to her family when her father, an elite SAS soldier and police officer from Bundaberg, was diagnosed with early onset dementia due to a military related concussion.

Legacy receives no government funding and relies solely on the community – veterans, service men and women and volunteers from all walks of life – to provide its many services.

The morning tea was also attended by Legacy Brisbane CEO Brendan Cox who worked with us in 2016 as part of our workplace wellbeing program, sharing his insights around providing emotional support and understanding in the face of adversity.

Show your support for Legacy by making an [online donation](#).



(L-R) Partner Cameron Dean, Brianna Anderson and Legacy Brisbane CEO Brendan Cox

## Queensland Legal Walk



As a founding member of LawRight (formerly QPILCH) McR has helped hundreds of vulnerable and disadvantaged Queenslanders seek justice in the face of significant and complex legal problems.

This financial year alone we have committed \$165,000 for pro bono legal services to help self-represented litigants and those who need civil law representation but cannot afford a private lawyer or who are ineligible for legal aid.

Each year we also participate in the Queensland Legal Walk, LawRight's largest annual fundraising event. The event attracts hundreds of colleagues from across the legal profession including leaders from government, the courts and judiciary, law faculties, national and local law firms, the profession's peak bodies and law students.

We invite you to join Team McR for this year's Legal Walk. Commencing at 7am on Tuesday 16 May, the walk starts and finishes at the Queen Elizabeth II Court Complex and follows a 5km route along both sides of the Brisbane River.

For further information [click here](#). To join Team McR contact Anna Mott on 07 3233 8636 or [amott@mccullough.com.au](mailto:amott@mccullough.com.au) before 5pm Monday 1 May.

If you are unable to participate but would like to show your support you can make an [online donation](#).



# Michelle Thomsen

## Started at McR...

in 1999 as an Articled Clerk

## Left McR...

in 2002 for a role as Senior Associate at Deacons in Sydney

## Now works at...

Bank of Queensland as Group Executive, General Counsel & Company Secretary



Michelle's journey with McR started when she was 15 years old doing work experience in the Brisbane office and then, during her university years, as a summer clerk. She enjoyed the experience so much that, when looking for somewhere to complete her articled clerkship she decided not to apply anywhere else!

As an articled clerk at McR Michelle worked on major projects for resources, energy and infrastructure clients. She also advised on fund raising for resources companies and carried out general corporate work.

Michelle said she felt incredibly supported by McR when she decided to leave for a senior associate position in Deacons' Sydney office.

*"McR gave me a great technical base. It's a terrific platform for young lawyers regardless of the direction they take".*

After five years in this role she was presented with an opportunity at global investment house Babcock & Brown, as legal counsel. This was a big step and an unplanned change of direction for Michelle, who had aspired to become a partner in a private firm. But the excitement of working on major international transactions was too good to refuse and Michelle spent four years

in this role, including several years in the London office.

Still in London (and following the administration of Babcock & Brown), Michelle moved to legal firm SJ Berwin LLP where she joined the firm as a partner in the energy and infrastructure team. She was the Head of Renewables, Cleantech & Carbon across Europe and the UK. In 2012, Michelle moved back to Australia so that she and her then 18-month old son Sebastian (who was born in London) could be closer to family. Over the next three years Michelle held roles at Transpacific Industries and Suncorp.

Michelle commenced her current role as Group Executive, General Counsel and Company Secretary in July 2015. She is responsible for managing the Group's in-house Legal & Secretariat team and for managing relationships with external legal partners. She also advises the CEO & Managing Director and the BOQ Board in relation to all legal and governance matters.

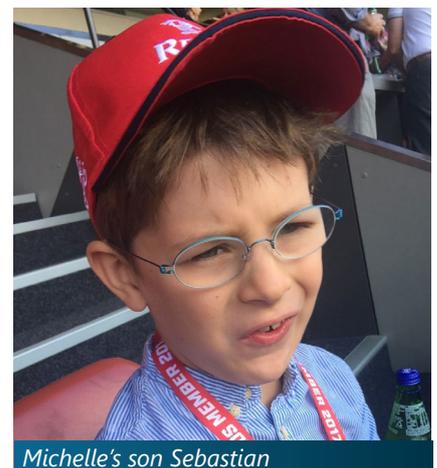
Michelle loves the people side of her role, particularly working with her high performing team. Rather than restructure the incumbent team as is a common path, Michelle restructured the team and made several of her direct report appointments from internal resources.

Throughout her career Michelle has remained connected to McR and enjoys friendships and working relationships

with several current and former employees.

In 2016 Michelle was appointed to the Board of Queensland Rugby Union, a role she finds very rewarding. Michelle considers well-being an integral part of her life and makes it a priority to 'keep herself sane'. Whilst at McR she played in the mixed netball and beach volleyball teams and dabbled in some kick boxing while playing Premier Grade squash.

How does she do it all? She has a methodical approach to achieving work life balance, making it a priority to leave work on time each day in order to read Sebastian (now six years old) a story before he goes to bed. She also enjoys travelling and has taken Sebastian to South Africa on safari, where he developed a love of photography. Locally they enjoy heading down to Currumbin for a surf.



Michelle's son Sebastian

Welcome back

# Melinda Kastanya



## Started at McR...

as an intern in 2007

## Left McR...

in 2010 to work as legal counsel at Virgin Australia

## Returned to McR...

in 2015 as a Senior Associate in the Intellectual Property Group

### You started with McR as an intern?

Yes, I completed a four week internship in the Intellectual Property team and then continued as a research clerk before being recruited as a Graduate Lawyer in the Intellectual Property team.

### You have a science degree as well?

Yes prior to commencing in law, I completed a science degree at UQ and the University of Nottingham in the UK. After this I spent a year living in Dubai and working as a flight attendant for Emirates while I contemplated whether I wanted to pursue a career in law or medicine.

*"I was ready for a new challenge and knew I would get that at McR"*

### And you chose law obviously?

Yes, I returned to Brisbane and completed post graduate studies in law as well as my Practical Legal Training. I studied full-time while working as I was determined to finish in two years.

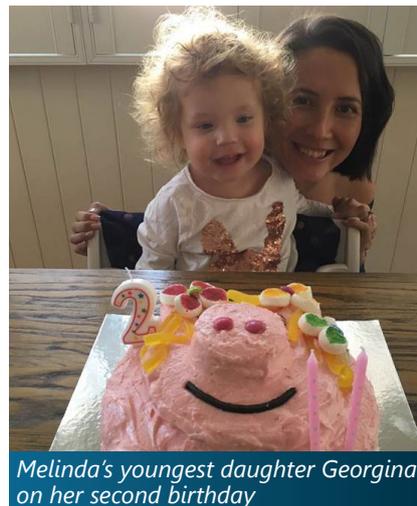
### Tell us about Virgin.

I've always had an interest in the commercial side of law and wanted to experience being part of the business and having the opportunity to see a project I had worked on in operation. I was offered a role as legal counsel within

its sizable legal department, where I worked on IP consumer law and general commercial law. I really enjoyed working with the engineers on procurement contracts and spent time in the hangar learning about their operations and key risks.

### And you had two children during your time at Virgin?

Yes, I took six months of maternity leave to have my daughter Harriette, who is now four years old. I returned to my role on a part-time basis before taking leave to have my second daughter Georgina, who is almost 3 years old.



*Melinda's youngest daughter Georgina on her second birthday*

### Then you returned to McR!

Leaving Virgin was a tough decision due to the relationships I had formed there but I felt like I needed a new challenge, which I knew I'd find at McR.

I wanted the opportunity to challenge myself and continue my learning and development as a lawyer.



*The Kastanya family at their home in Clayfield*

### How did you approach returning to McR?

I had kept in touch with former colleagues over the years, particularly Partner Belinda Breakspear. During one of our catch ups she mentioned that the team was looking for someone so I came in for coffee and the rest is history. It was lovely to be welcomed back to the team.



*Harriette and Georgina getting up to mischief on holidays*

### What about outside of work? How do you spend your spare time?

I enjoy cooking and love entertaining friends and family at our home. My husband is a M&A lawyer at QGC Shell so as a family we are quite busy and just tend to enjoy down time with the children when we can. With our third child due in September I envisage there will be less and less spare time!

## Refer a friend

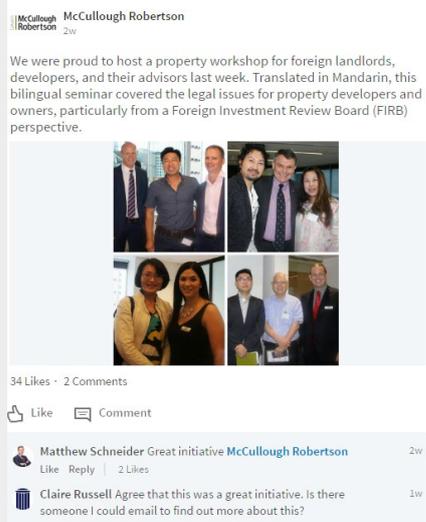
We are always on the lookout for talented individuals to join us and invite you to refer friends to job opportunities at McCullough Robertson. You will find our current opportunities on our [careers page](#).

Be social



# with @McRlaw

Find us on **LinkedIn**, **Twitter**, **Facebook** and **Instagram** to stay across our latest news, industry updates, thought leadership, events and career opportunities. Plus you can interact with us, join forums, ask questions and share your feedback.



## Stay connected

We've made it easy for you to communicate with us because we want to hear about your life, career and progress since leaving the firm.

- Email us at** [alumni@mccullough.com.au](mailto:alumni@mccullough.com.au)
- Join us on LinkedIn** Stay connected with former colleagues and friends via our **alumni group on LinkedIn**
- Register or update your details** Visit the **alumni registration page** on our website or email [alumni@mccullough.com.au](mailto:alumni@mccullough.com.au)

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