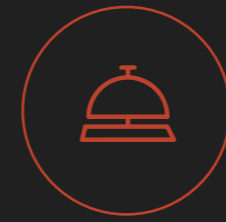


WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Female practitioners in the management rights space share their perspectives on an evolving industry.

Is there a female perspective of the management rights industry? Is it reasonable to even ask that question in these hyper gender-conscious times? We'll leave the answer to that question up to you. But the women we interviewed for this feature were happy to share their perspectives.

The views they expressed are as varied and diverse as these women themselves and help illuminate what is still a largely male-dominated domain.



THE OPERATOR

Georgina Bishop

Key word: Flexibility

Georgina Bishop took on her first management rights business in 2010 when she was looking for flexible employment as a single mother with two children, aged 11 and 13. She was 47, recently divorced and had been out of the workforce for 11 years, having been a stay-at-home mother in Fiji before relocating back to her hometown of Brisbane.

"I needed to be at the state school at five minutes past 3 pm at the latest every single day for pickup and could be back in the office again within 20 minutes," says Georgina. "Nobody on the body corporate questioned that. If one of my children got sick and I needed to go, I could get away. What other industry can you do that in?"

"The management rights industry appeals to women because of the flexibility it provides,"

Armed with a management degree, a background in retail and no shortage of get-up-and go, Georgina bought the management rights to the 61-unit Newstead Terraces, which she sold (through ResortBrokers) in April this year.

Prior to acquiring Newstead Terraces, Georgina had worked part-time in property management, earning \$20 an hour. She found she liked the work but not the constraints of working for someone else.

"I thought, I'm not a very good employee, this is not suiting me, but I like property management. I thought management rights sounded like a better fit for me."

Georgina bought Newstead Terraces using her super, money from her divorce settlement and borrowings from ANZ. She currently operates the 39-unit Boulevard Apartments in New Farm and is the former operator of the 20-unit Lush Apartments in Lutwyche, which she operated for two years until selling recently. Her excellence in the management of apartment complexes has been acknowledged with multiple ARAMA awards, including a 2023 Building Manager of the Year Award.

"The management rights industry appeals to women because of the flexibility it provides," says Georgina. "You can do meetings in your car with your baby in the back if you need to. That's this industry. It's really female friendly."

THE LAWYERS



Amy O'Donnell

Key Word: Nurturing

With almost 25 years' experience behind her, Amy O'Donnell is the most senior female practitioner in the management rights industry.

A partner at Mahoneys since 2020, Amy got her start in management rights shortly after finishing her articles with Hillhouse Burrough McKeown in the late 1990s. Having already worked on motel transactions, when the firm acquired a management rights practice, newly admitted Amy put her hand up for the work and has remained a specialist in the field since. In 2004, she moved to Hynes Legal, where she stayed (other than a couple of years away from the field when her children were very young) until joining Mahoneys.

"A lot of lawyers are afraid of specialising too early," says Amy. "I take the opposite view. I think specialisation is the key to a successful career. It allowed me to concentrate on, and become an expert in, management rights and motels, which benefits the clients I act for."

Now, more than two decades later she's still enjoying it.

"I like helping people achieve their goals of getting into, and succeeding at, business. These days it can take up to six months from signing the contract to settlement. It's not a quick process."

"It's very hard to separate the natural mothering tendencies to helping clients."



"So I get to work with my clients over a long period. You can't beat the settlement day buzz when they finally achieve what they've been working towards. So, from that perspective, working with people to achieve what they want is great."

A mother of two teenagers, Amy says she brings her maternal experience and instincts to her work.

"It's very hard to separate the natural mothering tendencies to helping clients through the process of buying, running and selling a management rights business, especially when a lot of my clients are mum and dad operators" she says. "When I'm talking to a client, I'm turning my mind to more than just the legal transaction. Buyers might be selling a home to finance a management rights purchase. Or they might be moving locations, so there's often the logistics of moving a family, perhaps with the added difficulty of uprooting kids and finding a new school."

"It's always a little different each time, so being conscious of that is hugely important to helping them beyond the legal side of things."

Sharon Flood

Key Word: Communication

Sharon Flood commenced her legal career at Hynes Lawyers in 2005 before establishing Flood Legal in 2014.

"This was always my long-term plan," says the 42-year-old. "I aim to provide my clients with a unique service. Branching out on my own allowed me to achieve that. It also provided me with the flexibility to have children and work from home when necessary and be able to enjoy all the things that being a parent offers — school events, sport and all the other fun stuff."

Sharon manages a thriving legal practice and a family of five children, ranging in age from six to 13. How does she manage it?

"I'm fortunate to have an exceptional husband, which is tremendously beneficial," she says. "I strive to balance my work and family time. I desire a bit more work-life balance, but it's challenging. I haven't quite figured that out yet!"

Situated in Kingscliff close to her home in Fingal allows Sharon less time travelling to work and more time being able to service her clients and spend time with her family.

Flood Legal specialises primarily in management rights conveyances and offers clients a fixed-fee payment structure.

"Many of my clients are first business purchasers or small management rights operators who have budgeted a specific amount for their transaction. I take pleasure in providing them with that level of certainty. Some law firms still bill by the hour, but that's not a practice I wish to focus on."

Flood Legal has a team of seven women of different ages and skills. The practice offers staff the opportunity of working from home with team members based in Moreton Bay, Brisbane City and the Gold Coast.

"In our sphere, if you consider the lawyers, I'd estimate that perhaps a quarter, or even fewer, are women. In terms of owning a firm, I believe I'm the only female principal who has ventured out on her own servicing the management rights industry."

Do women make better management rights lawyers?

"I can't say," says Sharon. "I tend to be more of a peacemaker than a fighter. I'm not a litigator and don't have one on my team. I aim to promptly resolve matters and find pragmatic solutions rather than prolonging disputes. My approach to transactions and disputes is distinct from that of other firms in our field. I prefer to initiate dialogue between the parties before situations escalate. In most instances, this approach significantly aids in resolution. There are very few disputes I'm unable to resolve, and it costs my clients substantially less."

"I prefer to initiate dialogue between the parties before situations escalate."



THE CONSULTANT



Kelley Rigby

Key Word: Growth

Kelley Rigby is the powerhouse behind Letts Group, a business development consultancy specialising in management rights.

Active in the industry for over a decade, with experience in residential sales and working for ARAMA, Kelley branched out on her own with Letts Group five years ago. The group works as business development manager for its operator clients to grow or rebuild their letting pool.

"After my maternity leave, I decided I wanted to be a more hands-on mum, and thought, 'How do I do this?' I can't go back to nine to five," says Kelley. "A manager friend called to say they were losing investors out of their letting pool, and asked if I could help. We started working together and Letts Group evolved from there."

Based in Mermaid Waters, Letts Group has clients all over Queensland though concentrated in Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

"People forget how important the relationship side is. It's all about building relationships."



Kelley says she was initially reluctant to tell clients she was a working mother, but that opening up helped establish a connection other mothers could relate to.

"When I first had my son, I was very shy about telling people I was a working mum because you think they'll think you aren't going to work hard," says the 36-year-old. "But actually it's the opposite. As I opened up to everyone about being a mum my business grew 10-fold because of it. When I opened up to owner-investors about being a working mum it built relationships straightaway because you have that mum club. The secret club!"

"People forget how important the relationship side is. It's like anything in business, but especially management rights. It's all about building relationships and communities."

THE FINANCE BROKERS



Tayla Phipps & Simone Kennedy

Key Word: Reassurance

Tayla Phipps and Simone Kennedy are client managers at Mike Phipps Finance, the finance brokerage and consultancy service founded by management rights industry stalwart Mike Phipps, who is Tayla's father-in-law.

"There's definitely an impact women have had on the management rights industry," says 27-year-old Tayla. "Most of our clients are couples whose dream is to have their own business. If they can't get the finance, they can't make their dream happen. I take a lot of responsibility in playing a part in making their dream come true."

"It could be a couple's first management rights purchase so take the time to listen to them."

"It's obviously a pretty hectic process they're going through. Everyone they're dealing with is so busy as they go through the motions of the deal, but they're forgetting it's this couple's first time and that they may have no idea what's going on. I take the time to not only listen to them but also to explain the finance side of it and other aspects of the transaction."

Adds Simone, "Something I really enjoy about this work is we're funding mums and dads into a dream. It could be an older couple who want to go into a smaller complex for lifestyle reasons. Touching on what Tayla said, you have that emotional aspect. It's not so much about getting a deal done but being able to assist someone achieve their dream. You're emotionally invested in their transaction, so you'll go to the ends of the earth to get it across the line."

Both Tayla and Simone acknowledge the role mentors have played in their careers. Tayla credits Mike for giving her the encouragement to establish herself in the industry, and Simone says it's a privilege to work for prominent industry figures such as Mike, Cameron Wicking and Paul Grant.



THE COMMUNITY BUILDER



Marisa Millane

Key word: Connection

Marisa Millane is the driving force behind the popular Women In industry luncheons.

Launched in 2017, the luncheons hit their stride in 2020 in the wake of the pandemic.

"After Covid, everyone was craving connection. You could feel it across the industry," says Marisa. "People wanted a space where they could all come together."

Marisa's journey into management rights began 15 years ago in Broadbeach, where she managed Markham Court, Penthouse Apartments and Paros on the Beach. After leaving those businesses in 2014, she transitioned into the IT sector, spending eight years as a business development manager for Freedom Internet, where she was responsible for installing broadband in management rights complexes. Today, she is a director and co-founder of Ottro, which offers management rights training, employment opportunities and consultancy solutions for industry operators.

Women In is Marisa's passion project. "It's my way to give back to an industry I hold in high regard," she says.

Ten luncheons are held annually, rotating between the Gold Coast, Brisbane and Sunshine Coast.

"People enter management rights with dreams of a great lifestyle," says Marisa. "But soon many feel isolated, asking themselves,

"People wanted a space where they could all come together."



"What have I done?" They often don't know where to turn, especially in the first three to six months. While there's plenty of contact during the pre-purchase period, the day after settlement new managers are often left to navigate on their own."

"Women In gatherings provide an open, friendly space where people can come together as one, share knowledge and connect from a place of understanding. These events reassure operators that everything will be okay, reminding them that they're not alone. Beyond being a social venue, these gatherings create opportunities to network, often leading to new connections."

Once exclusively women-only affairs, some luncheons are now open to all.

"We've recently expanded our platform to welcome men in our industry, responding to numerous requests over the years asking, 'Can I come?' Because all they had was golf days. So, I've opened it up. We need both men and women in this industry!"

THE ACCOUNTANT



"Gender is increasingly less of an issue due to women's growing confidence."

Lel Parnis

Key word: Confidence

Since 2016, Lel Parnis has been a principal at well-known industry accountancy practice Holmans where she specialises in providing tax, audit and advisory services to accommodation clients.

"What I like about management rights is it used to be all about the man and now that's increasingly less of an issue," says Lel. "The whole gender thing has become irrelevant. It's just who's better at any particular aspect of a management rights business. Sometimes it's the man, sometimes it's the woman. The expectation that it's just the man has gone."

Originally from Scotland, the 36-year-old Chartered Accountant holds a bachelor's degree in law and accounting.

"Multitasking, flexibility and time management are things women bring to management rights that are more of a struggle for men. Historically, management rights were mum-and-dad businesses, with mostly the dad looking after everything and the mum was on reception. I feel that has changed quite quickly in recent years. Increasingly, I'm finding it's the women in the couples taking the lead."



"I feel confidence has been a big part in women taking over from men as the main business head. There was an expectation in the past it would be the man, but they might not have been the best of the two. But now women have more confidence to step into that role."

Lel herself is a working mother. She and her husband have three children: two boys aged five and three, and a six-month-old girl. How does she juggle work and family?

"Badly!" she says with a smile.

THE BROKER



Chenoa Daniel

Key word: Change

Chenoa Daniel and Jessie Shi (see separate feature) are unique among ResortBrokers' management rights agents — they've been operators themselves.

Over 12 years, Chenoa operated two successful management rights businesses, as well as a consultancy to advise other operators, before joining ResortBrokers in 2016.

Chenoa says gender attitudes have changed in the 20 years she's been in the industry.

"So many people have traditionally looked for the man behind the management rights business," says Chenoa. "But it's often the women behind the business."

"When we owned management rights, people used to come into reception and ask, 'Is your husband here?' I'd politely say, 'He's out cleaning the pool. How may I help you?'"

"I don't know why more people still don't expect women to be at the coal face of management rights. Some of the best lawyers and accountants I work with in this industry are women."

"Some of the best lawyers and accountants I work with in this industry are women."

Representing ResortBrokers on the Sunshine Coast since 2020, Chenoa has established herself as one of the region's most experienced and highly regarded management rights agents. Over her eight-year career as a broker, which includes three years with ResortBrokers in North Queensland before moving to the Sunshine Coast, she has sold 68 management rights businesses with a combined worth of more than \$147 million. In September 2023, Chenoa set a new Sunshine Coast management rights record with the sale of Oceans Mooloolaba Beach for \$11.2 million.

Do women make better brokers?

"Yes and no," says Chenoa. "Women are probably more emotionally invested in transactions. To get a deal over the line, I'd give it CPR if I could! Men might be a little more detached. Women are more empathetic, but we also hold onto things a lot more. One thing I find as a woman is, something will happen, and I'll hold onto it so much more than perhaps a man would. I hear it from other female brokers in the industry. We're awake at 2 am thinking about things!" **END**

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