

# GLOBAL INSIGHTS: SECONDEES AT HENGELER

INTERVIEW WITH **RACHEL GIBNEY**, CORRS CHAMBERS WESTGARTH

## 1 | Please introduce yourself and describe your career path to date.

**M**y name is Rachel Gibney, I am a visiting lawyer from the Australian law firm, Corrs Chambers Westgarth. I am currently completing a 12-month secondment at Hengeler based in the Munich office. Since 2022, I have worked as a lawyer in the Intellectual Property Litigation practice group. My day-to-day practice in Australia ranges from smaller consumer protection matters, to large scale litigation and arbitration matters.

## 2 | How did you come to start your secondment with us? Are there any specific reasons why you chose Hengeler?

It was always a goal of mine to spend some time living and working overseas, particularly in Europe. 2024 was a good time in my career to take on a new challenge and gain international experience. I discovered that Corrs and Hengeler had an existing relationship, with a number of secondees having gone back and forth between the two firms over the years. As a firm, Hengeler was a great choice as it has a similar client network and could provide exposure to significant EU-related and cross-border matters.



## 3 | Which areas of law do you mainly focus on during your secondment?

While at Hengeler, I am working in the Dispute Resolution practice group, with a particular focus on international arbitration. Being a part of this arbitration team has been a great experience and has meant that I have had the opportunity to meet and work with a range of colleagues from other offices. Outside of Dispute Resolution, I have also assisted the Antitrust team in various EU regulation matters. An absolute highlight of my secondment was being able to attend the Court of Justice of the European Union to observe the hearing of one of the EU regulation matters that I assisted with.

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## 4 | What are the most significant differences between the Australian and the German legal system?

The most significant differences come from the distinctions between the civil law system and the common law systems. As a common law lawyer, my practice typically revolves around a combination of legislation and case-based precedents and court proceedings which follow an adversarial procedure. Working within a civil jurisdiction and being involved in EU law matters, has allowed me to witness firsthand the impact that an inquisitorial approach has on court hearings. What has surprised me the most is that while the procedures and principles which underpin the common law and civil law systems are fundamentally different, the outcome is very often the same!



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## 5 | How does the work at Hengeler differ from your home law firm?

In Australia, the structure of the practice groups is typically similar to the practice group structure at Hengeler. At Corrs, it is also common for junior lawyers to be given the opportunity to work with multiple partners, across offices and in some cases across different practice groups.

## 6 | What did you take away from the secondment, professionally and personally?

Professionally the secondment was an exciting challenge which has allowed me to gain experience in varied cross-border matters, broaden my understanding of EU law and civil law systems, and form relationships with new colleagues. I have found the insight into EU law incredibly valuable and something that I will be able to incorporate in my practice going forward. From a personal perspective, I have enjoyed meeting so many new people and being able to explore so much of Europe!

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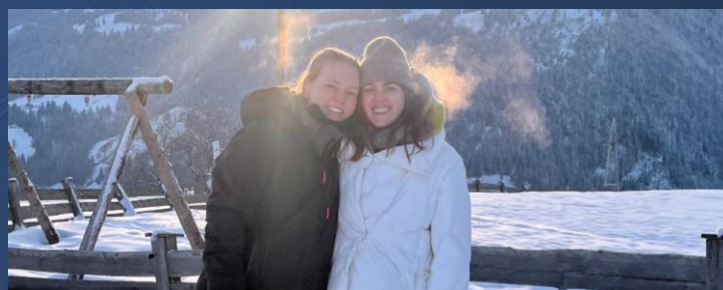
*Of course, the obligatory attendance at a Bayern game was very fun!*



## 7 | What was your most memorable or unique moment during your time here?

An absolute highlight of my time in Munich has been the proximity to nature. I have loved being able to explore so many of the beautiful alpine lakes just outside of Munich.

Although I am not a skier, a memorable day was being able to watch my colleagues on the Austrian alps while enjoying some après ski. And of course, the obligatory attendance at a Bayern game was very fun!



## 8 | A different viewpoint: What makes Australia exciting for a secondment in the legal sector?

Australia is a great place to visit, especially if you have more than a couple of weeks to explore. In addition to the stunning beaches, rainforests and outback, Australia's major cities are a great hub for good food and friendly people. Melbourne in particular has lots of great food and wine spots, live music and sporting events, and very, very good coffee. On the professional side, gaining experience in an English-speaking common law jurisdiction is a great opportunity for career development as you would be able to gain valuable insights that could be incorporated into your career going forward.

## 9 | What's next for you – professionally and personally?

After my secondment finishes in mid-September, I will spend one month exploring Albania and Greece before returning to Melbourne. After settling back in, I am looking forward to re-connecting with my Corrs colleagues and incorporating many of the things that I have learnt at Hengeler into my daily practice.

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