



Thirty Years, Three Careers, One Unbreakable Bond

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Senior Legal Assistants Teresa Lowe and Priscilla Philp, along with Associate Senior Registered Legal Executive, Melissa Cox, have been working, travelling and laughing alongside one another since the early 1990s.

Around our office they're affectionately known as T3 (the "tight three") and we rarely ever see them apart. They share everything from their daily commute to lunch and coffee breaks, favourite TV shows and weekly trips to the library. Their competitive spirit often sees them win office dress-up competitions - their latest effort being The Three Blind Mice.

“There are plenty of people who work at Cooneys for quite a while and form long friendships,” Priscilla explains. “But we’ve maintained a very close friendship over the years, even while we were living in different countries or no longer working in the same office. We’re godparents to each other’s kids, have been bridesmaids, and have travelled overseas and lived together... the good, the bad, and everything else in between.”

The trio all joined CLM early in their careers, and each has taken a break to raise their families or do an OE before returning to the firm. Mel recalls living in London when Priscilla decided to fly over and move into her flat. “It was awesome. I hadn’t travelled before so it was all very daunting for me. I had temped for a while around London and then got made semi-permanent at Clifford Chance. And that’s where P joined me. We travelled to Ireland together, and Scotland a couple of times. Did you come to Turkey?”

“No,” Priscilla replies. “But you and T came to see me when I lived in Hong Kong. And you visited me in Sydney as well. Remember when we did the Melbourne Cup? That was fantastic...”

Other highlights include road trips to see Bruce Springsteen in Auckland, Robbie Williams in Napier, and countless headline acts at Taupo’s annual summer concert. They’ve seen the All Blacks at Eden Park, played netball together in Tauranga, and attended family birthdays, funerals and other important milestones.

“It’s a life-long, true, deep friendship,” Mel says. “You know when you’ve found your people. There’s no judgement. Priscilla is one of the funniest people I know, and Teresa is extremely kind. It’s a bonus that we work together as well and don’t just get to hang out on the weekends.”

Their friendship has endured life’s hardest chapters too. They speak with deep affection about Leanne, their fourth friend in the early days, who passed away from cancer aged 26. CLM’s support for her family at that time remains something the women remember with gratitude.

“They really wrapped around Leanne and her family, and allowed her to do what she could work-wise in those last six months,” Mel says. “They were amazing. The firm was very good at supporting us too.” Priscilla acknowledges that whānau is a

key value at CLM. “They’ve always been good at supporting families and that continues today for staff who need extra help or time off.”

After three decades, Teresa says the trio’s bond is now so strong they can often communicate via a single look. “We do a lot of laughing. We have a Messenger group and we’re always in communication. Are you watching blah blah on TV? Just sharing all the little things that happen in life. We plan to do line dancing but we haven’t got there yet.”

“Maybe next year,” Mel quips.

The gentle teasing is relentless and the trio’s laughter is infectious. They joke about getting ‘PMT’ tattoos to match their initials but agree time for such things is long past. With six children between them – ranging in age from 11 to 44 – there are still plenty of family milestones ahead to celebrate. And all three agree they’ll happily stay at CLM until they retire.

“It’s like the old saying goes, ‘you can choose your friends, not your family’,” Teresa says. “It’s so true isn’t it? When you find your people, you just know.”