

CLIFFE DEKKER HOFMEYR PARTNER CONTENT

# WHEN OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

**TESSA BREWIS**, director – Banking, Finance & Projects and joint head – Projects & Energy at Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr, writes that sometimes, the most rewarding careers begin not with a plan, but with an unexpected opportunity

**W**orking as a lawyer in a large law firm for over two decades, with more than 18 years at my current firm, Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr, has been both demanding and deeply rewarding. Much of my work has focused on the corporate and commercial aspects of projects, particularly in the renewable energy space. This has given me the opportunity to contribute, in a small but meaningful way, to sustainability – something that aligns closely with my personal values and brings added purpose to my professional life.

Over the years, one of the key lessons I've learned is the value of gaining broad experience and a solid foundation before narrowing your focus. To young professionals, especially women entering the legal field, I often say: don't be in a hurry to specialise. Be open to unexpected paths, even if they don't align perfectly with your studies or early career plans.

## SHIFTING DIRECTION

My personal journey reflects this. I started out concentrating on corporate and commercial law, with no plans to work in the energy sector. Then in 2009, when a colleague emigrated, I was asked to take over one of his matters and assist with a lease amendment for a wind farm. As a qualified notary and conveyancer, the request made sense. At the time, I had no background in energy law and hadn't given much thought to the sector, but that first matter sparked an interest. One instruction led to another, and soon thereafter, South Africa launched the Renewable Energy

Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP), which created space for new practice areas to emerge.

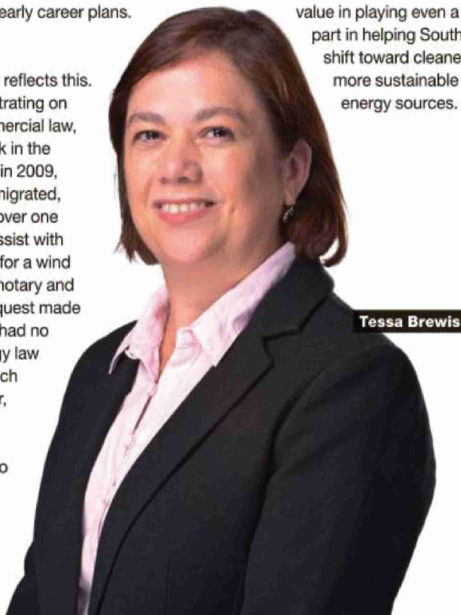
The early stages of REIPPPP felt like a formative time in the sector. We worked to build teams with experience in project finance, corporate, construction, environmental, property law and economic development. Collaborating with international colleagues – many of whom were generous with their insights – helped us grow and develop quickly. Later my mergers and acquisitions background also meant I became involved in some of the early secondary market transactions where clients sold stakes in operational renewable energy projects.

What continues to motivate me is the sense that our work contributes to something larger than any one deal. While legal work is often driven by business needs, I believe there's real value in playing even a small part in helping South Africa shift toward cleaner, more sustainable energy sources.

## ONE OF THE KEY LESSONS I'VE LEARNED IS THE VALUE OF GAINING BROAD EXPERIENCE AND A SOLID FOUNDATION BEFORE NARROWING YOUR FOCUS.

This kind of work also touches on broader themes – sustainability, inclusion and social impact – all of which are at the heart of the G20's Sustainable Development Goals. It also serves as a reminder that women can lead and thrive, building expertise and creating space for others along the way. That, to me, is a powerful form of progress.

I hope more women feel encouraged to explore emerging fields like this where legal skills can align with meaningful change. Sometimes, the most rewarding careers begin not with a plan, but with an unexpected opportunity. ●



**Tessa Brewis**



**VISIT WEBSITE**

SCAN THIS QR CODE TO GO TO  
THE CLIFFE DEKKER HOFMEYR WEBSITE



For more information:

● [www.cliffedekkerhofmeyr.com](http://www.cliffedekkerhofmeyr.com)