



 Howse Williams

## Family and Matrimonial Practice

September 2023

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**Howse Williams is an independent Hong Kong law firm which combines the in-depth experience of its lawyers with a creative, forward-thinking approach.**

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## **About Us**

Our key practice areas are corporate/commercial and corporate finance; commercial and maritime dispute resolution; clinical negligence and healthcare; insurance, personal injury and professional indemnity insurance; employment; family and matrimonial; property and building management; banking; fraud; distressed debt; investments fund; virtual assets; financial services/corporate regulatory and compliance.

As an independent law firm we are able to minimise legal and commercial conflicts of interest and act for clients in every industry sector. The partners have spent the majority of their careers in Hong Kong and have a detailed understanding of international business and business in Asia.

The HW partners and their teams have an excellent reputation for delivering high quality legal advice with a practical and commercial approach to solving legal issues in line with clients' commercial objectives.

## Our Approach

We provide a personal, practical and cost-oriented approach to clients who are often undergoing a very stressful and difficult period in their lives. We work closely with other professionals in the field of family disputes, particularly mediators, to provide the best solution for our clients. We fully support mediation as an alternative method of resolving family disputes. We are accessible, respond immediately when emergencies arise and provide our services efficiently and effectively. Our clients' privacy and the confidentiality of their personal arrangements are treated with the utmost importance. We ensure that our clients have a realistic idea of what to expect from our services. We have no hesitation in taking action by way of legal proceedings immediately if the necessity arises but overall our approach is conciliatory. We are mindful that the cases we handle are very sensitive and often involve children. We provide practical solutions and protect our clients' interests.

## Our Family and Matrimonial Practice

Our team is led by **Linda Heathfield**, who has nearly 30 years of family and matrimonial legal experience. Our clients include professionals, entrepreneurs, owners of family businesses, celebrities, and high net worth individuals, often with assets in multiple jurisdictions around the world. Linda and her team have experience of contested multi-jurisdictional cases in the USA, France, Switzerland, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Canada, the UK, and mainland China and have been involved in cases relating to the Hague Convention on the Abduction of Children involving children wrongfully removed from, or wrongfully brought to Hong Kong. In addition we provide advice upon the following:

- Relationship breakdown, divorce and separation, including financial applications and arrangements for children.
- Disputes involving the custody, care and control of children, including access and child maintenance.
- Issues involving children such as paternity, schooling and name change applications both in respect of married and unmarried couples and cohabitants.
- Abduction or return of children to or from Hague Convention and non-Hague Convention countries.
- Family financial issues such as maintenance claims and capital claims, including property transfers.
- Emergency injunction applications (e.g. to prevent the disposal of assets or their removal abroad and to protect the victims of abuse and domestic violence).
- Applications for private adoptions.
- Pre-nuptial agreements, post-nuptial agreements and separation deeds.
- Reputation management and media issues.

## Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP)

Our team also provide advice on a wide range of inheritance and succession matters including:

- Trusts, in particular setting up family trusts, educational trusts and charitable trusts
- Drafting of wills, probate and enduring powers of attorney
- Providing for an individual following their partner's death, while protecting the interests of their children
- Ensuring elderly or vulnerable relatives are cared for and supported
- Protecting the interests of co-habiting couples
- Helping clients to support charitable causes in an effective way

HW Partner Victoria Ng So is a Registered Trusts and Estates practitioner. STEP is a worldwide professional association with over 20,000 members across 95 countries. STEP holds its members to the highest ethical and professional standards.





## Linda Heathfield

*Consultant*

Direct +852 2803 3624  
Fax +852 2803 3680  
Email linda.heathfield@howsewilliams.com

Born in England and holding both British and Australian nationality, Linda was admitted to practice law in Hong Kong in October 1994 and in England and Wales in June 1995. She was later admitted to practice in Queensland Australia in January 2002.

Linda's cases often involve families with assets in multiple jurisdictions around the world. Her work includes all manner of children's issues, including custody, care and control and other parenting disputes, such as access, child maintenance, paternity and schooling applications both in respect of married and unmarried couples and cohabitants. Linda has processed a number of applications for private adoptions, usually with extended families or step-families and cases involving the abduction or return of children to or from Hague Convention and non-Hague Convention countries. Her work in respect of family finances has covered maintenance claims made for or against her clients, capital claims, including property transfers as well as an increasing number of pre-nuptial agreements and separation deeds.

Linda became an Executive Committee Member of the Hong Kong Family Law Association in 2006 and was its Chairlady in 2010 and 2011. She was elected a Fellow of the International Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers in 2007 and became a member of the International Academy of Collaborative Practitioners in 2009 with the objective of becoming an active collaborative lawyer. She has undertaken the first multi-disciplinary training set up in Hong Kong for collaborative family law. Linda has completed mediation and advanced mediation courses in 1996 and 1997 and whilst never becoming a practicing mediator, actively promotes mediation as a means of resolving her clients' disputes.

Linda has edited educational materials on family law and matrimonial practice for Legal Executives studying in Hong Kong through Hong Kong University in conjunction with the Institute of Legal Executives in the UK.

### ▼ *Experience*

2012 Howse Williams  
2008 Ip & Heathfield  
1994 Boase, Cohen & Collins

### ▼ *Education*

University of Hong Kong, 1991-1992  
University of Liverpool, 1973-1976

▼ *Professional Admissions / Qualifications*

1994 Hong Kong

1995 England & Wales

2002 Australia (Queensland)

▼ *Professional Affiliations*

Fellow, International Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (2007)

Member, International Academy of Collaborative Practitioners (2009)

Member of Lawasia



## Karen Lam

*Partner*

Direct +852 2803 3639  
Fax +852 2803 3680  
Email [karensy.lam@howsewilliams.com](mailto:karensy.lam@howsewilliams.com)

Karen was admitted to practice law in New South Wales, Australia in 2007 and Hong Kong in 2008. Karen's practice focuses on family law matters with emphasis on matrimonial disputes including divorce and separation, child custody, wardship and financial applications, third party interests, injunctions, pre- and post-nuptial agreements and settlements. Karen's other areas of focus are will drafting, probate and general civil litigation matters.

Karen is a member of the Family Law Committee of the Law Society of Hong Kong and the Committee of the Hong Kong Family Law Association. Karen has been elected a fellow of the International Academy of Family Lawyers in 2020. Karen has been appointed by the Chief Justice to sit on the Family Proceedings Court Users Committee in January 2021. Karen has obtained the Lawyer's License of the People's Republic of China (Guangdong - Hong Kong - Macao Greater Bay Area) in 2022.

Karen is an Accredited Mediator on the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre's (HKIAC) Panel of General Mediators and is a Civil Celebrant of Marriages in Hong Kong.

Karen is a qualified Private Adjudicator on financial disputes in Matrimonial and Family Proceedings.

*"Karen Lam is a star in the industry and is a very safe and reliable pair of hands."*  
*Legal 500 2022*

### ▼ *Experience*

2012 Howse Williams  
2009 Ip & Heathfield  
2008 Boase, Cohen & Collins

### ▼ *Education*

PCLL, City University of Hong Kong  
Bachelor of Laws, University of New South Wales, Australia  
Bachelor of Commerce, University of New South Wales, Australia

### ▼ *Professional Admissions / Qualifications*

2023 Private Adjudicator (Financial Disputes in Matrimonial and Family Proceedings)  
2022 The People's Republic of China (Guangdong - Hong Kong - Macao Greater Bay Area)  
2016 Civil Celebrant of Marriages  
2010 Accredited General Mediator  
2008 Hong Kong  
2007 New South Wales, Australia

▼ *Professional Affiliations*

Member of the Family Proceedings Court Users Committee  
Member of the Family Law Committee, The Law Society of Hong Kong  
Fellow, International Academy of Family Lawyers  
Member of Committee, Hong Kong Family Law Association  
Member, Hong Kong Collaborative Practice Group  
Member, LAWASIA



## Victoria Ng So TEP

*Partner*

Direct +852 2803 3727  
Fax +852 2803 3680  
Email [victoria.so@howsewilliams.com](mailto:victoria.so@howsewilliams.com)

Victoria was admitted as a solicitor in Hong Kong in 2013.

Victoria's practice focuses on matrimonial and trust matters. Her cases always involve international elements including relocations and substantial overseas assets, including those held in overseas trust. Victoria advises clients on issues when new marital relationships are to be formed or when relationships break down, drafts and negotiates pre-nuptial and post-nuptial agreements, separation deeds, and divorce settlements.

Victoria advises on children matters such as custody, care and control, access arrangement disputes with respect to children born to married and unmarried couples and cohabitants. She also advises on a wide range of inheritance and succession matters.

Victoria is a Registered Trusts & Estates Practitioner with STEP (the Society of Trust & Estate Practitioners) and sits on STEP HK Marketing & Communications Sub-committee. Victoria has been awarded the STEP Diploma in International Trust Management with distinction. She advises on trusts and the duties of trustees as well as beneficiaries' rights to information on trusts.

Victoria is a part-time lecturer at the University of Hong Kong for the Matrimonial Practice and Procedure module in Postgraduate Certificate in Laws. She is also an Executive Committee Member of the Hong Kong Family Law Association and sits on LawAsia Family Law & Family Rights Committee. She is fluent in English, Cantonese and Putonghua.

### ▼ Experience

2014 Howse Williams  
2011 Ip & Heathfield

### ▼ Education

2017 Diploma in International Trust Management (Distinction), STEP  
2011 Postgraduate Certificate in Laws (PCLL), The University of Hong Kong  
2010 Master of Laws in Chinese Law (LLM), Peking University, Beijing  
2008 Bachelor of Laws (LLB), King's College London, UK

### ▼ Professional Admissions / Qualifications

2021 Civil Celebrant of Marriages  
2019 Registered Trust & Estate Practitioner, STEP  
2013 Solicitor of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

### ▼ Professional Affiliations

Executive Committee Member, Hong Kong Family Law Association  
Committee Member, LawAsia Family Law & Family Rights Committee  
Committee Member, STEP HK Marketing & Communications Sub-committee  
Member, The Law Society of Hong Kong

## Our Team



### **Veronica Lee**

*Associate*

Direct           +852 2803 3742  
Fax               +852 2803 3680  
Email            veronica.lee@howsewilliams.com

Veronica was admitted as a solicitor in Hong Kong in 2018. Her practice focuses on family and matrimonial disputes relating to divorce and separation, ancillary relief applications, and children matters such as custody, care and control and access arrangements, both with respect to children born to married and unmarried couples. In addition to divorce proceedings, Veronica has experience in preparing and reviewing and advising pre- and post-nuptial agreements.

Veronica speaks fluent English, Cantonese and Mandarin.



### **Hermia Wong**

*Associate*

Direct           +852 2803 3789  
Fax               +852 2803 3680  
Email            hermia.wong@howsewilliams.com

Hermia is admitted as a solicitor in Hong Kong in 2021. Hermia specialises in international children's rights law, in particular, surrogacy, and cross-border child abduction whether or not under the framework of The Hague Convention on the Abduction of Children.

Hermia has earned Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) from King's College London, and thereafter a Master of Laws (LL.M.) specialised in International Children's Rights from Leiden University in the Netherlands, where she graduated first in her cohort with highest distinction. She also came first of year in the module of Matrimonial Law and Procedures when reading PCLL in the University of Hong Kong.

Hermia's practice focuses on family and children matters. Prior to joining Howse Williams, Hermia was trained in boutique family law firms in London and Hong Kong. She also undertook secondments in the Hong Kong Department of Justice, and a specialist criminal defence law firm. She assists the Family Team at Howse Williams in a variety of cases including disputes arising from nuptial agreements, assets tracing, children's care arrangements, parental orders, child protection, wardship proceedings; as well as drafting wills, Enduring Power of Attorney, and non-contentious probate matters.

Hermia is a qualified parenting coordinator under the requirements of the Association of Family and Conciliatory Courts (AFCC), United States, and she accepts instructions to provide parenting coordination services in Hong Kong.

Hermia completed her advanced accredited family mediation training in 2023, and is currently a trainee mediator in Hong Kong. She also received Child Inclusive Mediation and Counselling training in Australia in the same year.

She speaks fluent English, Cantonese and Putonghua.

