Howse Williams

Shipping Practice

August 2026

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Howse Williams is a leading, full service, Hong Kong law firm. We combine the in-depth experience of our lawyers with a forward thinking approach.

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; trusts and wealth preservation; wills, probate and estate administration; property and building management; banking; fraud; distressed debt; investment funds; 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 Shipping Practice

HW shipping practice specialises in maritime dispute resolution; mergers and acquisitions; competition and regulation and infrastructure.

Our shipping team handles a wide range of disputes both in Hong Kong and throughout Asia. The team (which includes solicitors with seagoing experience) has considerable experience in all types of wet and dry shipping litigation. We handle shipbuilding, sale and purchase, collision, salvage, wreck removal and pollution cases, as well as charterparty, bill of lading and other contract of affreightment disputes. We advise ship-owners, P&I Clubs, Hull and Machinery insurers, salvors, charterers and freight forwarders. The team has particular expertise in handling problems arising from the shipment of steel, coal, iron ore, nickel ore and fluorspar.

Our clients include charterers, shipowners and their insurers (P&I Clubs), cargo owners, freight forwarders, recovery agents, logistic companies, godowns, terminals, port authorities, commodity traders and their insurers and other organisations in the marine transport and insurance industries.

Our practice includes:

- P&I and Defence Club work.
- Policy terms and disputes (e.g. war risk, breach of warranty, insurable interest, material non-disclosure etc.).
- Charterparty and bill of lading disputes.
- Collision, salvage and wreck removal.
- Commodity and sale of goods disputes.
- Marine insurance disputes (cargo and hull policies).
- Arbitration in London, Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea and the PRC.
- MOA disputes.
- Personal injury, employee's compensation and crew claims.
- Sale and purchase of vessels, including commercial vessels such as bulk carriers and tng boats, as well as yachts and oil rigs.
- Shipbuilding contracts for standard and specialist vessels, including offshore structures and complex engineering projects.
- Competition/regulatory work
- Mergers & acquisitions, IPOs, debt and equity capital markets, privatisations, international joint ventures, restricting and financial services.
- Development, investment and financing of port projects working with a diverse range of organisations including governments, port authorities, developers and lenders.
- Regulatory issues on Customs & Excise, Labour Department (safety) and environmental matters including defending the relevant summons/charges.
- Container terminals defence work.
- Yacht policy disputes.

Chris Howse

Partner

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Chris has more than 43 years of legal experience. He built the Hong Kong office of Richards Butler and he was Senior Partner and Managing Partner of that office from 1983 to 2011. He has considerable experience in arbitration and he is qualified as an arbitrator in Hong Kong, China (CIETAC and CMAC), Singapore, Korea, Malaysia and other Southeast Asian jurisdictions. He has represented parties in arbitrations in China (both CIETAC and CMAC), Hong Kong, London, Singapore and Malaysia. Chris is also an accredited mediator.

Chris specialises in maritime and commercial dispute resolution, handling a wide range of disputes in the Hong Kong courts and international arbitrations throughout Asia. He has considerable experience in all types of dry shipping litigation on behalf of owners, charterers and their P&I Clubs. He also has particular expertise handling problems arising from the shipment of coal, iron ore, nickel ore and fluorspar.

Chris also provides professional indemnity advice and assistance to a full spectrum of professionals in Hong Kong, including solicitors, accountants, brokers, architects, doctors, dentists and other healthcare professionals.

Chris leads the medico-legal team with partner David Kan. They advise doctors, dentists and their indemnity providers/insurers as well as private hospitals and other healthcare professionals. Chris also advises private hospitals, corporate healthcare providers and pharmaceutical companies on issues relating to the import and distribution of drugs and pharmaceutical products, drug liability claims and other regulatory matters.

Experience

2012 Howse Williams
2011 Reed Smith Richards Butler
2008 Richards Butler in Association with Reed Smith LLP
1983 Richards Butler, Hong Kong
1975 Richards Butler, London

Education

1975 College of Law
1973 University of Bristol, BA (Hons)
1970 University of Geneva

Professional Admissions / Qualifications

1978 England and Wales
1981 Hong Kong
1988 Australia

Arbitration:
Fellow, Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (Hong Kong)
Fellow, Hong Kong Institute of Arbitrators Ltd
Supporting Member, London Maritime Arbitrators Association
Arbitrator, Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre
Arbitrator, China Maritime Arbitration Commission
Arbitrator, China International Economic and Trade Arbitration Commission
Arbitrator, Hong Kong Maritime Arbitration Group
Arbitrator, Korean Commercial Arbitration Board
Member, Hong Kong Arbitrations Law Review Committee (1996-2000)

Professional Indemnity Insurance:
Member, Hong Kong Law Society Professional Indemnity Insurance Claims Committee (1989-1999)
Deputy Chairman, Hong Kong Law Society Professional Indemnity Claims Committee (1999-2004)
Chairman, Hong Kong Law Society Professional Indemnity Claims Committee (2004-2007)
Member, Hong Kong Law Society Working Party on Professional Indemnity Insurance Scheme (1996-2004)
Chairman, Hong Kong Professional Indemnity Review Committee (2002)
Member, Hong Kong Law Society Professional Indemnity Advisory Committee (1999-2006)
Director, Hong Kong Solicitors Indemnity Fund Limited

David Coogans

Partner

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David is a commercial disputes lawyer specialising in international trade disputes. David has over 25 years of experience in commercial dispute resolution. He advises a wide variety of shipping interests including marine and non-marine insurers. David also has extensive experience outside of international trade matters, including dealing with, insolvency matters, shareholder disputes and the recovery and tracing of monies lost due to internet/identity fraud.

Before qualifying as a lawyer, David served as a deck officer in the British Merchant Navy with the Cunard Steamship Company. He has dealt with several high profile casualty matters.

David has handled both Court proceedings and Arbitrations concerning a wide range of disputes in Hong Kong, England & Wales, Australia, Singapore and the United States. David is familiar with UNCITRAL rules, LMAA terms, ICDR, ACICA and SIAC Rules. David has also acted as mediator in several high value disputes.

Experience

2012 Howse Williams
2005 General Counsel P&O Cruises Sydney Australia
1989 Richards Butler, Hong Kong
1976 Cunard Steamship Company

Education

1985 College of Law, Chancery Lane, London, Solicitors Final Examinations
1984 Anglia University, England, BA (Hons)
1980 Riversdale College, Liverpool, England, British 2nd Deck Officer's Certificate of Competency

Professional Admissions / Qualifications

1987 England and Wales
1989 Hong Kong
1991 Australia (NSW & Victoria and the ACT)

Professional Affiliations

LEADR and nationally accredited mediation practitioner
Member, Law Society of Hong Kong
Member of the Hong Kong Maritime Law Association Executive Committee
Board member of the Maritime Services Training Board

Bernard Murphy

Partner

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A medically qualified solicitor, Bernard specialises in medico-legal issues, acting for a wide range of healthcare professionals including doctors, dentists, nurses and physiotherapists in proceedings before the Medical Council, in clinical negligence claims, Coroner's Court inquests, and Department of Health investigations. Bernard also advises ship owners and P&I Clubs in relation to personal injury and fatal accident claims. He was admitted as a solicitor in Hong Kong in 2004 and in England and Wales in 2005.

Bernard's legal career began with Richards Butler Hong Kong. Before qualifying as a lawyer, Bernard practised medicine for more than ten years, the majority of that time in Hong Kong and China.

An Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Accident and Emergency Medicine, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Bernard lectures on healthcare legal issues for the Chinese University Department of Accident and Emergency Medicine. He also presents lectures/workshops for doctors' medical practices, public and private hospitals, the Chinese University School of Public Health, and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University Department of Physiotherapy.

Experience

2012 Howse Williams
2011 Reed Smith Richards Butler
2008 Richards Butler in Association with Reed Smith LLP
2002 Richards Butler, Hong Kong

Education

2002 University of Hong Kong, Postgraduate Certificate in Law
2001 Manchester Metropolitan University, Postgraduate Diploma in Law
1988 University of Aberdeen, Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery

Professional Admissions / Qualifications

2005 England and Wales
2004 Hong Kong

Professional Affiliations

Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Accident and Emergency Medicine, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Foundation Member, Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine, Royal College of Physicians
Member, British Medical Association of Hong Kong
Member, Law Society of England and Wales
Member, Law Society of Hong Kong

William Leung

Partner

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"*The hardworking William Leung provides pragmatic and solutions-oriented advice.*" Client testimonial in Legal 500 2024

As a prominent commercial litigator with more than 26 years solid experience, William with his team of lawyers specialise in the following:

Commercial litigation

William's commercial practice ranges from companies'/shareholder's disputes, joint venture disputes, winding up/bankruptcy, restructuring and corporate risk management issues. His clients would include from prominent liquidators and/or receivers, corporates, listed companies, directors/officers of listed companies, banks/lenders, investors, charitable organisations to private/corporate shareholders and bankrupts. Notably, William and his team have recently been involved in a number of large winding up/re-restructuring matters and acting for a well-known tycoon in appealing against the bankruptcy order.

He also handles general debt recovery matters for listed companies, financial institutions and banks and is well known for his efficiency and costs effectiveness producing great results for clients.

He has ample experience in acting for both Claimants and Recipients for funds internet fraud cases and also advises on crypto currency fraud/scams and related urgent recovery actions including injunctive reliefs, as well as related enforcement and tracing actions.

Contentious probate/trust litigations

William and his team act for settlors, trustees, beneficiaries, protectors on contentious trust and probate (very or ultra-high net worth) matters. For the past 2 years, they have been advising on more than 10 cases with net assets worth between HKD200 milllion to HKD3 billion. William is well-praised for his strategic forethoughts and advice particularly on complex family relationships and multi-jurisdiction asset structures which often lead to amicable settlement.

Insurance litigation

William acts for more than 10 large international/PRC insurers covering public liability, property, marine, travel and EC/PI insurance. He is also a leading advisor in dealing with industrial accidents with emphasis in fatal and serious injury cases. He has formed a specialist team in dealing with crisis management which would arrive at the accident scene (fatal and serious injury) quickly to deal with urgent compliance matters and enforcement authorities.

William regularly gives talks and seminars on insurance matters due to his high acclaim within the industry.

Transport litigation

William acts for shipping companies, forwarders, international logistic companies, four of the largest container terminals in Hong Kong and leading warehouse operators along with their liability/property insurers. He has unrivalled experience in handling a wide range of contentious matters on bills of lading/air waybills, cargo claims, forwarding, warehousing, logistics disputes and non-contentious matters such as drafting of complex logistic services agreements. Particularly he is a leading figure in advising container terminals on their contracts with shipping lines, emergency casualty, employment, compliance matters, property damage and fire incidents and oil spillage cases. He has advised on transport related regulatory matters such as enforcement actions by Customs and Excise Department, Labour Department, Environmental Protection Department and ICAC.

William is also on the Transportation and Logistics Committee of the Law Society of Hong Kong.

"William Leung is a very good and experienced expert to deal with complex marine claims matters." Legal 500 2022

Pleasure crafts

William has vast experience on yacht matters including sale and purchase of super yachts (including escrow service), collision, casualty, fire and their related personal injury, insurance and litigation matters.

Escrow agent / accounts

William frequently advises on escrow agent / account agreements and their litigation risks to facilitate sale and purchase of high value yachts, club debentures offshore properties and high value antiques/ paintings etc. In appropriate cases, our firm will act as escrow agent or stakeholder.

Arts/Paintings

William also advises on sale and purchase of arts/paintings for a number of prominent collectors.

Accreditation

William has been consistently named as one of the leading lawyers in Hong Kong by various legal directories. He is admitted to practice law in both Hong Kong and England and Wales.

William also holds a number of public posts with a view to rewarding the society.

Experience

2019 Howse Williams
2015 Howse Williams Bowers

2009 Eversheds
2001 DLA Piper
2000 Stevenson Wong & Co
1998 Hampton, Winter & Glynn

- *Education*

1997 PCLL, University of Hong Kong
1993 LLB, University of Wales / Portobello College, Dublin, Ireland

- *Professional Qualifications*

2001 England and Wales (Practising Solicitor)
1999 Hong Kong SAR (Practising Solicitor)

- *Public Office*

Present

Since 2024	Chairman of the Appeal Tribunal Panel (Buildings Ordinance Cap.123) appointed by the Secretary for Development, Government of HKSAR
Since 2024	Member of Small and Medium Firms Committee of The Law Society of The Hong Kong (Co-option)
Since 2023	The Transport Tribunals' Panel (Chairman) appointed by Secretary for Transport and Housing
Since 2021	Member of Patient Complaint Committee of The Prince Philip Dental Hospital
Since 2018	Transportation and Logistics Committee of The Law Society of Hong Kong (Co-option)
Since 2013	Admiralty Court Users Committee appointed by Chief Justice of HKSAR (Member)

Past

Since 2017 to Mar 2023	The Transport Tribunals' Panel (Member) appointed by Secretary for Transport and Housing
Since 2015 to Dec 2020	The Board of Review, Inland Revenue Department (Panel member)
Since 2015 to Aug 2020	The Obscene Articles Tribunal (Member Adjudicator appointed by Chief Justice of HKSAR)

Zoe Chan

Partner

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Zoe has extensive experience across a broad range of contentious and advisory matters.

She is experienced in insolvency and bankruptcy proceedings, including post insolvency and post bankruptcy recovery actions, as well as shareholder disputes and boardroom conflicts.

She also regularly acts for individual and corporate clients in regulatory and white-collar crime defence matters, including Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) and Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) investigations. Her experience includes advising individuals and corporate clients on regulatory exposure, assisting with investigations and enforcement proceedings, and navigating complex defence strategies in high stakes regulatory matters.

Besides, she is also skilled in handling complex high net worth trust and estate disputes, often involving sophisticated trust structures, substantial assets, and sensitive private client issues.

Zoe is admitted as a solicitor in Hong Kong since 2016. She is fluent in English, Cantonese and Mandarin.

Notable experience:

- Acting for liquidators in s182 proceedings against a financial institution involving recovery of post-petition payments by insolvent company to third-party in the total sum of around HK$59 million
- Acting in a Bankruptcy appeal proceedings relating to a debt of more than HKD 10 billion on technical grounds and securing time for an intended debt-restructuring plan
- Acting for a corporate client in successfully discharging ex-parte Mareva injunction against trust assets in the value of at least HKD 2 billion to keep the client afloat pending determination of main action
- Advising on high profile complex securities related ICAC/SFC investigations with at least 30 potential defendants
- Acting for a beneficiary in a forensic investigation and advising in respect of an estate dispute with estate value of more than HKD 500 million
- Advising trust companies in respect of various disputes, including fraud, directors/officers misconduct and contractual disputes

Experience

2022 Howse Williams
2019 Ince & Co.
2018 ONC Lawyers
2016 Lam, Lee & Lai

Education

2014 The Postgraduate Certificate in Laws, City University of Hong Kong
2013 Bachelor of Law, University of Sydney

Professional Admissions / Qualifications

2016 Hong Kong

Professional Affiliations

Member, Law Society of Hong Kong

Carin Lau
Associate

Carin is an associate in the Litigation Department, having joined HW as a trainee in 2019 and qualified as a solicitor in Hong Kong in 2022. Carin has wide-ranging experience in commercial litigation, arbitration and dispute resolution, including contractual disputes, commercial fraud matters, asset recovery, urgent injunctions, debt recovery, insolvency and enforcement proceedings. She also assists with shipping and international trade disputes. She has worked on various contentious shipping matters involving charterparty, bill of lading, cargo damage and off-hire disputes.

Carin is fluent in English, Cantonese and Mandarin.

Joyce Leung
Associate

Joyce is an Associate in our Dispute Resolution practice.

She has a broad civil and commercial practice, with particular experience in boardroom, shareholder and joint venture disputes, business torts, contractual disputes, debt recovery, fraud, injunctions, insolvency and enforcement proceedings.

She also assists with shipping and international trade disputes. She has worked on contentious shipping matters including bill of lading and charterparty disputes.

Joyce has represented clients in Hong Kong court proceedings and international arbitration. She has worked on arbitrations under various major institutional rules (including HKIAC, LCIA, SIAC, ICC and ICDR rules) as well as ad hoc arbitrations under the UNCITRAL and LMAA rules.

She is fluent in English, Cantonese and Mandarin.

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