Huw Watkins

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Overview

Huw is an Australian based barrister and arbitrator. His practice includes a busy domestic and cross-border practice. He has expertise in construction law, corporate law, international arbitration and private international law. He appears in all jurisdictions in Australia and in domestic and international arbitrations.

Commercial Disputes

Huw acts in all areas of commercial law. He has recently been briefed in:

- The FW Aviation v VietJet enforcement actions in Australia (enforcement of UK Supreme Court decision).
- Shareholder, partnership and joint venture disputes in the NSW and Victorian Supreme Courts.
- Shareholder oppression and directors' duties matters.
- Challenges to preliminary discovery in respect of foreign entities.
- A wide range of construction disputes including major construction projects (such as the Ichthys LNG project, desalination plants, geothermal powerplants and chemical plants) and smaller property development (commercial and residential) disputes.

Commercial Arbitration

Huw is particularly active in the arbitration field and has worked on many construction and project disputes in Southeast Asia and Australia. Aside from having run numerous international and domestic arbitrations (as both counsel and arbitrator), he is also a fellow of ACICA and the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators. He teaches International Dispute Resolution at Keio University (LLM program) and other institutions. Huw is involved in key initiatives and committees in relation to arbitration within the Victorian Bar and the Australian Bar association.

Huw has recently been involved in:

- acting for an international consortium in relation to a complex multi-billion dollar arbitration relating to the Ichthys LNG project (construction).
- Acting as claimant counsel in a SIAC arbitration relating to solar energy project acquisition dispute (commercial, not construction).
- ACICA arbitration for the successful respondent in defending claims of frustration and force majeure related to an arbitration (licensing dispute).
- Acting as sole arbitrator in disputes relating to: (i) post-acquisition M&A matters; (ii) financial agreements; and (iii) property development disputes.

Huw has published awards as arbitrator under the ACICA and VCAS Rules.

Huw has been recognised by Doyle's Guide as a leading Arbitration Barrister in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025. Huw speaks fluent Japanese and often runs matters with issues relating to foreign language evidence.

Employment History

Called to the Bar of England & Wales (Lincoln's Inn, July 2024)
Victorian Bar, Barrister (May 2019-current)
Ashurst Tokyo, Senior Associate (May 2018 - December 2018)
Ashurst Tokyo, Associate (October 2014 - April 2018)
Ashurst Australia (Melbourne), Lawyer (February 2011 – October 2014)
Keith E. Hoban, Barrister & Solicitor (August 2010 – February 2011)

Appointments/ Memberships	Arbitrator, Asian International Arbitration Centre, SIAC Reserve List, HKIAC Fellow/Arbitrator, ACICA and the Resolution Institute Victorian Bar International Commercial Arbitration Committee member Australian Bar Association, International Committee Lecturer, Keio University (2018-ongoing)
Qualifications and admissions	Called to the Bar of England and Wales (July 2024 – Lincoln's Inn) Called to the Bar in Victoria (May 2019) CIArb Fellowship (2018) Victorian Supreme Court and High Court of Australia (2010) Australian National University (Dip. Legal Practice with merit) (2010) Monash University (LLB (Hons)) (2009) Monash University (BA (Hons) majors in Chinese & Japanese) (2009)
Detailed experience (matters pre-2019 are as a solicitor)	*International Arbitration / International Dispute Resolution* • **Acting for Japanese Corporate in Energy Market Related expedited arbitration seated in Victoria:** Unled, single arbitrator with claims of approximately $5,000,000 (2026 – ongoing). • **FW Aviation (Holdings) 1 Limited v Vietjet Aviation Joint Stock Company (VSC, S ECI 2025 03944):** Counsel for VietJet in proceedings for the set aside of a registered judgment in Victoria. • **SIAC Arbitration (2025):** Counsel for renewable energy project investor (solar) relating to post acquisition dispute arbitration (SIAC Rules). Led by David Collins SC. • **ACICA Arbitration:** Arbitrator in expedited arbitration relating to post acquisition disputes regarding return of bank guarantees (specific performance) and breach of warranty. Final award published in January 2024 (2025). • **ACICA Arbitration:** Respondent counsel in circa €800,000 licensing dispute relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, frustration and force majeure (2021). • **CAA (Taiwan) Arbitration:** Advice and preparation of claims under the CAA Arbitration Rules in relation to a franchise dispute and claims of force majeure resulting from COVID-19 (2020). • **ICC Arbitration** (**Construction, Subcontract Dispute):** Acting as respondent counsel for the contractor in a major international arbitration relating to an EPC sub-contract dispute related to the Ichthys LNG Project. Led by Andrew White KC, Adam Constable KC, Joseph Garas SC and Charles Scerri SC (2019-2022). • **SIAC Arbitration (Commercial, JV Contract, SE Asian Project):** Claimant counsel for a major Japanese trading house in respect of a dispute with its JV Partner in a SE Asian gas project. Appeared as the junior advocate in successful defence of preliminary challenge to arbitrability and jurisdiction in November 2018 (2016-2019). • **SIAC Arbitration:** Claimant counsel for a major Japanese contractor in respect of a SIAC arbitration relating to a power plant dispute in Indonesia (2016-2018). • **Construction arbitration (ICC, Singapore):** Acted as respondent counsel for a Japanese engineering company in a dispute relating to the scope of its obligations under an EPC contract for a chemical plant, delay and liquidated damages claims. Responsible for Japanese witnesses, preparation of the quantum evidence, and junior counsel for the cross-examination of the technical experts (2016-2019).

- **Construction arbitration (ICC, Singapore):** Successful challenge to jurisdiction of Tribunal in an ICC arbitration seated in Singapore (2015 - 2016).
- **Gorgon LNG Project**: Detailed pre dispute advice and liability analysis in respect of allegedly defective goods (2015).
- **Contaminated product dispute:** Advise Japanese trading house in respect of claims against manufacturer of food products supplied to client and on-sold in Japan (2015).

Appellate

- *SEC New Line v Muffin Break* (Victorian Court of Appeal, reserved): Acting for the respondent in further appeal by SEC New Line to the Court of Appeal following [2025] VSC 183. Appeared unled in the Court of Appeal in September 2026.
- *SEC New Line v Muffin Break* [2025] VSC 183, sole counsel for the respondent in appeal relating to franchisor obligations and the obligation of good faith. Successful. Related decision of *Sec New Line Pty Ltd v Muffin Break Pty Ltd* [2024] VSC 728.
- *Anees v Minister for Immigration* [2020] FCAFC 28

Domestic arbitration / Litigation / Strategic Advisory

- *SES v SEM Fire & Rescue & Anor* ***S ECI 2022 04652 (Vic):*** Acting for specialised truck body builders in dispute relating to 68 emergency vehicles produced between 2007 and 2018. Led by Charles Parkinson KC (2026 – ongoing).
- ***Bertrams & Ors v Giken*** **(NSW Supreme Court):** Acting for Giken Seisakusho in NSW Supreme Court proceedings against its former JV partner. Dispute in excess of $11,000,000. Led by Terry Mehigan SC (2024-2025).
- *Walker Trusco Pty Ltd & Ors v Amelda Keys and Anors:* Acted for the former owner of Aspen Medical in respect of proceedings for loss of opportunity, misrepresentation and breach of trustee duties. Including acting in respect of defence to claims for infringement of copyright and breach of confidential information. Led by Michael Wise KC together with Natalie Hickey.
- **Change of Control Dispute:** Shareholder agreement dispute presently before the NSW Supreme Court. Acting unled as counsel for the Plaintiff, a Hong Kong incorporated company (2023 – ongoing)
- **Share Sale Agreement Dispute**: Unled NSW district court proceedings for a HK incorporated company relating to the recovery of service fees under a Share Sale Agreement. Successful recovery (2023).
- **Bertrams & Ors v Giken (Federal Court of Australia):** Counsel to defendants in Federal Court proceedings relating to allegations of oppressive conduct, misleading and deceptive conduct and other matters. Federal Court proceeding with related NSW SC proceedings. Led by Terry Mehigan SC (2021-2023).
- ***Brighton Automotive Holdings Pty Ltd v Honda Australia Pty Ltd*** **[2021] VSC 757 (Supreme Court of Victoria – International Jurisdiction dispute)** – Acting for Honda Motors in an application to contest jurisdiction and service outside of jurisdiction of an application for preliminary discovery. Led by Tom Clarke (2021).

(continued)

- ***Satchell v 70 Esplanade Pty Ltd* [2021] VCC 1946:** Appeared unled for the Second Defendant in 8 day hearing relating to a property development joint venture dispute.
- ***Aquasure Pty Ltd v Thiess Pty Ltd & Ors* (2021 VSC):** Junior counsel involved in (i) privilege review and related dispute (ii) preparation of evidence for trial in a dispute involving the Wonthaggi Desalination Plant**. Led by Philip Solomon KC** together with Rowan Minson**.**
- *Han v SAL National Pty Ltd (Human Rights)* [2021] VCAT 395. Defence of discrimination claim brought against lighting manufacturer.
- **Domestic Arbitration - Incorporated association:** Counsel to the claimant in a domestic construction arbitration (2021).
- **Indonesian Agent**: Advice relating to arbitration prospects and termination of an Agency Agreement in Indonesia (2021).
- *Anees v Minister for Immigration* [2020] FCAFC 28, led by Julian Burnside KC.
- *DFU16 v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs* [2021] FCA 222.
- *Leota v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs* [2020] FCA 1120.
- *Anees v Minister for Immigration and Border Protection (No 2)* [2020] FCAFC 67, led by Julian Burnside KC.
- **HK based Lender:** Advice regarding long-arm jurisdiction and service of process issues relating to Supreme and County Court proceedings (2020).
- **Marubeni:** Strategic advice on exit mechanisms, Australian insolvency law and potential oppression remedies in relation to distressed joint venture (2017-2018)**.**
- **Sharp Corporation**: Providing strategic advice to Sharp Corporation in relation to product liability related proceedings in the Victorian Supreme Court (2017).
- ***Mitchell Water Australia Pty Ltd v Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water Corporation* SCI 2013 3496:** Assisted GWM with its conduct of litigation in the Supreme Court of Victoria in relation to a construction dispute arising out of a major water infrastructure project (2013-2014).
- ***Wheelahan & Ors. v City of Casey*:** Assisted Casey City Council with its long-standing litigation against Frankston City Council and others arising out of the management of a local landfill by two municipal councils and related class action (2014).
- ***Maxir Nominees v VCM Construction* (2013) VSC:** Acted for Hitachi in relation to claims in respect of air-conditioning works for a car dealership.

Languages	English (Native), Japanese (Fluent, >JLPT N1), Chinese - Mandarin (Limited)
Nationality	Australian / British