



Ian De Witt

Partner and Co-Head of Restructuring and Insolvency

Practice areas: Restructuring and Insolvency, Litigation, Regulatory and Compliance, Fraud and Asset Tracing, Mediation

Jurisdictions: England and Wales (1989) (non-practising), New South Wales, Queensland, Ireland, North Ireland (1998) (non-practising), Hong Kong (1996)

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Profile

Ian De Witt was born in Wales and obtained an honours degree in law in London. After qualifying as a solicitor in England and Wales in 1989, he joined and became a partner in a prominent London law firm where he worked for many years before coming to Hong Kong in 1996.

Throughout his career, Ian has focused on commercial litigation and insolvency matters, including debt recovery, asset tracing and the enforcement of judgments, pre-emptive actions such as injunctions, court appointed receivers, and the appointment of provisional liquidators. He acts and advises in a variety of insolvency cases, acting for liquidators, receivers, creditors, security agents, bondholders and directors. Additionally, he has advised and acted in a wide range of commercial and contractual disputes, professional negligence claims, partnership and shareholder disputes.

Ian has also advised and acted for directors, employees and companies in respect of investigations, regulatory matters and prosecutions carried out by the Police, the Independent Commission Against Corruption ("ICAC"), the Commercial Crime Bureau ("CCB"), the Securities and Futures Commission ("SFC") and various professional disciplinary committees.

Ian has been a member of the International Insolvency Institute for several years and is also an accredited mediator of the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre. He sits on the Insolvency Committee for the Law Society, the technical and editorial committee of the Restructuring and Insolvency Faculty of Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the Official Receiver's Office Services Advisory Committee, and is a director of the Company and Insolvency Law Society.

He established Tanner De Witt in 1999 with his partner Richard Tanner (since retired) and one member of staff. Today, the firm is one of Hong Kong's largest and best-known independent law firm, regularly ranked as a leading firm, now having 17 partners and 100 people.

Ian is consistently recognised as a 'Leading Lawyer' for restructuring and insolvency in Hong Kong by various industry publications (*since 2014*) including *Chambers Asia Pacific/Greater China Region* and *Legal 500* (he currently stands as a Hall of Fame recipient), *IFLR*, *Who's Who Legal* and the *Global Restructuring Review*.

Experience and Publishable Key Cases

- Acted for one of the world's largest satellite operators, SES Germany GmbH and New Skies Satellites B.V., to successfully oppose a scheme of arrangement promulgated by one of its customers in Hong Kong (Century Sun International Limited).

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- Acted for Stellar Aircraft Holding Limited, a creditor in the HK\$42 billion restructuring of Hong Kong Airlines, where our intervention and negotiations were crucial in resolving long-standing issues and ensuring the airline's viability.
- Advised in respect of various well known and publicised cases, from the collapse of iconic guitar brand Gibson to trademarks related to the iconic Mini Moke car, based on the Mini and originally produced by the British Motor Corporation in the 60s, to acting for the liquidators of STX Pan Ocean (Hong Kong) Co., Limited, a company owned by Korea's largest drybulk carrier Pan Ocean Korea.
- Acted in a number of benchmark cases, from the first recognition in Hong Kong of a bankruptcy in Japan to *Field v. Barber Asia* (the leading Hong Kong case involving negligence against an independent financial advisor).
- Advised one of the largest seafood conglomerates in the world, China Fishery Group, on its highly publicised and hotly contested allegations of fraud in the sum of USD5.5 billion.
- Acted for one of the major shareholders of a Hong Kong company in a group (that includes HK-listed companies) that is currently the subject of several complex and cross-border shareholders' disputes.
- Acted for independent accounting firm simultaneously as the security agent for bondholders and as the receivers and managers of the security of two Hong Kong Companies.
- Instructed by multiple financial organisations to advise on and give expert evidence in foreign proceedings relating to a dispute and on whether Hong Kong is the most appropriate forum for dispute resolution.
- Acted in the opposition of a winding-up petition and in seeking an Order for the presentation to creditors of an opposed scheme of arrangement under the Companies Ordinance, in a billion-dollar debt restructuring in Hong Kong, forming part of one of the largest ever debt restructurings in Asia.
- Acted in a variety of regulatory and professional disciplinary matters, including SFC and CIB.
- Acted for the liquidators of many high-profile administrations, notably Oasis Airlines.
- Acted as an expert on Hong Kong liquidation procedure in US proceedings (including deposition).

Speaking Experience

Over the last few years, Ian has given many talks and presentations internationally on the topics of insolvency and commercial litigation, including:

- Business Development in the Asset Recovery World
- Enforcement and recognition – Asian perspectives
- Cross-border insolvencies involving Asia, the US and relevant offshore jurisdictions: A practical look at EMAS and China Fishery
- Offshore restructuring – what's happening and what's interesting
- The latest developments and updates in Hong Kong insolvency law
- Corporate Rescue
- Bankruptcy & Individual Voluntary Arrangements
- IVA Practical Application in Hong Kong
- Provisional Liquidation: The Procedure, The Practice, And Its Link With Corporate Rescue In Hong Kong Winding Up Procedures
- Debt Recovery: How To Do It And Make It Pay
- Current Insolvency Issues in Hong Kong
- The Strategic Use of Litigation Procedures
- Dispute Resolution in China: to litigate or arbitrate?

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He has spoken at conferences hosted by, amongst others, the American Bankruptcy Institute (ABI), the International Association of Young Lawyers (AIJA), the International Bar Association (IBA), the International Insolvency Institute (III), the International Association of Restructuring, Insolvency & Bankruptcy Professionals (INSOL International), ThoughtLeaders4 Fraud, Insolvency, Restructuring, Enforcement (FIRE), and the Law Society of Singapore.

Writing Experience

Ian has written many [articles](#) covering aspects of insolvency and commercial litigation and was a contributing editor for Sweet and Maxwell's Company Law in Hong Kong: Insolvency and most recently the first ever edition of the Commercial Litigation and Cross Border Enforcement Comparative Law Book (Hong Kong).

Testimonials

Chambers and Partners 2025: "Ian De Witt is the very best lawyer. He knows insolvency law and is extremely nice and easy to get on with, and popular with clients as a result."

Client testimonials included in **Legal 500 2024** states 'Ian de Witt is an exceptional problem solver. He combines this with decades of legal experience, and unparalleled knowledge of Hong Kong law, to deliver outstanding litigation results.' And 'Few know more about insolvency and restructuring than Ian De Witt; highly competent and well organised, focused on clients and well-liked.' **Chambers and Partners 2024** says "Ian is a seasoned professional." And "Ian is well recognised in the insolvency market."

China Business Law Journal recognized Ian De Witt as A-list 2023-2024: Visionaries.

Chambers and Partners 2023 quotes clients of Ian saying, "He is commercial, approachable and a fountain of knowledge in Hong Kong law and procedure." Further, "Ian is an excellent problem solver." **Legal 500 2023** notes, "Deep bench of talented and commercial lawyers led by Ian De Witt and [Robin Darton](#). The firm offers seamless service with pragmatic and strategic advice." And, "Ian de Witt and [Robin Darton](#) provide a very desirable mix of prior international law firm experience and working in a local team that has operated successfully in Hong Kong for many years, combining local knowledge with cross-border expertise."

Who's Who Legal recognises Ian as a Thought Leader in Asset Recovery (GIR) 2022 and remarks: 'Ian De Witt is a star of the Hong Kong market. He is well versed in advising multi-nationals, shareholders and high-net worth individuals on a range of asset recovery, restructuring and insolvency issues.' Additionally, "Ian De Witt is a prominent name in the asset recovery space, routinely representing key corporates in "heavyweight asset recovery work." And, "Ian De Witt earns recognition from market commentators as a deeply experienced practitioner who regularly acts for liquidators, receivers, creditors and financial institutions."

Selected by **Asian Legal Business** as being in the Top 50 Disputes lawyers in the Asia-Pacific region.

Chambers Asia Pacific 2021 notes: Ian De Witt is widely respected as a market leader with "a really good reputation" for complex insolvency matters. His deep expertise spans both the advisory and contentious aspects of restructuring and insolvency-related work. Ian is listed as a Band 1 Leading Individual.

Asia Pacific Legal 500 2021 notes: Ian is one of the 'top practitioners in insolvency and restructuring', user-friendly and cost-conscious' and 'easy to work with and very strategic.' Ian is listed in the Hall of Fame of Restructuring and Insolvency lawyers in Hong Kong.

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Chambers Asia Pacific 2020 notes: Ian De Witt is described as “one of the bible writers for insolvency law” by one source who adds: ‘He’s a walking dictionary on legal matters relating to insolvency.’ He often advises on contentious matters and counts distressed companies, liquidators and bond trustees among his clients. A market commentator notes: “He’s a safe pair of hands, he’s someone who really thinks of the problems that the cases give rise to and he’s got an almost encyclopaedical understanding of insolvency law.”

Memberships

Professional memberships

- American Bankruptcy Institute (ABI)
- British Chamber of Commerce
- Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA)
- Fellow of the Hong Kong Credit and Collection Management Association (HKCCMA)
- Hong Kong International Arbitration Center
- Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants (HKICPA) Restructuring and Insolvency Faculty Technical Sub-Committee
- Insolvency Law Committee of The Law Society of Hong Kong
- Institute of Financial Planners of Hong Kong
- International Association of Restructuring, Insolvency & Bankruptcy Professionals (INSOL International)
- International Bar Association (IBA)
- International Insolvency Institute (III)
- International Women’s Insolvency & Restructuring Confederation (IWIRC)
- Law Society Insolvency Committee
- Mediator accredited by the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre (HKIAC)
- The Law Society of Hong Kong
- ThoughtLeaders 4 Fraud, Insolvency, Recovery, Enforcement (FIRE)
- Turnaround Management Association (TMA)
- Company and Insolvency Law Society (COINS)
- Working Party on Taxation in Civil Proceedings of The Law Society of Hong Kong

Other memberships

- Classic Car Club of Hong Kong
- Gold Coast Yacht and Country Club
- Hong Kong Club
- Hong Kong member of: St David’s Society; The Royal Society of St George; St Patrick’s Society; and St Andrew’s Society
- Land Rovers Owner Club
- MG Owners’ Club
- Oriental Club London
- Royal Commonwealth Society
- Royal Geographical Society

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