

GLSA podcast – Clifford Chance transcript

00:00 - Trish (Host)

Hello everyone and welcome to the GLSA podcast. Think global, I'm Trish. You're today's host. Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people were the traditional custodians of this land and I would like to pay my respect to the elders, both past and present, of the Kulin nation and extend that respect to other Indigenous Australians present on this special episode. We have Chris from Clifford Chance. Welcome, Chris, it's lovely to have you here. Could you please introduce yourself?

00:31 - Chris (Host)

Hi everyone. Hi, Trish, thanks for the introduction. So yes, I am Chris. I am currently a second seat trainee with Clifford Chance in the Hong Kong office, and I graduated Melbourne Law School in 2021. So, yeah, super excited to be here.

00:45 - Trish (Host)

Perfect. Thank you so much for that short and sweet introduction. Before we go forth to discussing your current life as a legal practitioner, could you please let us know why did you want to pursue a career in law?

00:59 - Chris (Host)

Oh, good question, Trish. So essentially it kind of boils down to what I was doing in undergrad, which was commerce. And you know, as everyone knows, if you do commerce or accounting, rather at Melbourne you're forced into doing business law and tax law, and so that's kind of where I got my first taste of law and thankfully, I quite liked it. And then I realized after graduating commerce that, you know, this is something that I wanted to pursue and so, yeah, naturally I got into law. And then, you know, I got drawn into commercial law and yeah, lo and behold, here I am.

01:29 - Trish (Host)

Oh cool. A lot of my friends are from the business to law pipeline, which is quite cool. Many of our listeners will be students like me. And one thing I know that we are all looking forward to finishing a law degree and entering into a legal career. Could you please let us know how has your experience as a trainee at Clifford differ from your expectations before joining the firm?

01:53 - Chris (Host)

Oh yeah, it's a very good question. So, I think as a student, you don't really appreciate that you know, when you start working full-time at a firm that you know it's a whole different ball game from just starting at law school. And so, I think before I started my trainee contract at Clifford Shrine, I wasn't aware as much of all of the different elements that go into running a law firm. So, it's actually, you

know it's a very big machine, and then there's a lot that we need to do at every stage, be that business development, be that, you know, coming to events like this and the whole suite of other things that I think, as a student, you don't quite appreciate.

And so, what really surprised me was that there was a lot more to being a lawyer at a law firm like Clifford Shrike than just, you know, coming around and doing the wall, and so, yeah, that's been quite eye-opening. What also really surprised me was you know just how diverse and how many functions that Clifford Shrike has, you know, be that legal support professionals, be that the business support staff and so forth, you know it's yeah, there's a lot that goes into running a law firm.

02:58 - Trish (Host)

Yes, and it's always very interesting to see what surprises that we all have once we enter into our workforce. Chris, I know you're working in Hong Kong, and I know many of my friends are also keen to work in Hong Kong jurisdiction. What do you think are some of the benefits for students to work internationally after their degree?

03:16 - Chris (Host)

Yeah, good question. So, I think, first of all, yeah, it's a very good idea to get international exposure whilst you're young. Obviously, you know, if there was ever a time to do it, I'd say, you know, after law school is a very solid time, you know, before you have other commitments, like you know, family and other things tying you down. So, yeah, the first point would be definitely explored it whilst you're young and whilst you're out of law school. And I think that the advantages are, firstly, yeah, you get that international exposure and therefore you get a different kind of perspective on a different legal market.

So, the Hong Kong legal market is obviously quite different from the Australian legal market. Client base is quite different, the type of deals are quite different and with that, obviously, you know there are certain requirements to that. So, you know, for example, being a law in Hong Kong, you might need certain language skills. Like you know, you should probably have an understanding of Chinese of some sort. But that being said, I think, yeah, it's an invaluable experience to kind of see how it's done and somewhere else.

04:15 - Trish (Host)

Cool, and I know that you previously worked in global financial markets and are now working in a split seat in corporate litigation and dispute resolution. These all sound very interesting areas of practice but seem quite different from one another. Could you please share a little bit about your experience these two rotations and some highlights from them?

04:34 - Chris (Host)

Yeah, sure. So first of all, yeah, in global financial markets, which is GFM, I was specifically, I was in asset finance, which in essence, the practice at Clifford Chance was predominantly aviation financing, so helping, you know, aircraft lenders and airlines and so forth with transactions to get aircraft to

where they need to go. So, I guess, completing like, first of all, what really surprised me about the GFM seat, or like the asset finance seat, was that I didn't know just how much went into getting a plane to an airline. So, for example, I think a lot of people would be surprised to know that a lot of the major airlines don't actually own the aircraft that they fly. So, when you fly overseas on, you know, on the Qantas A330 or whatever, that plane is actually owned by someone else and there's quite a long process in getting that plane from the factory to an aviation leasing company.

So, someone actually owns the plane and then leasing it to the airline. So I think a highlight for me was an appreciation about, like, the aviation sector as a whole and the complexities that go into it. But also, I think a big highlight for me in asset finance was because you know, these transactions there's so numerous, there's so many planes that are flying around. It really instilled this a lot of like organizational skills and, you know, deal management skills that I think we're really useful for me in the rest of my training contracts. So yeah, but a particular, I guess, deal highlight for me was working with the Singapore team at CC Singapore and helping with quite a major transaction there that involved like financing and then also then leasing as well. So yeah, I really enjoyed working internationally with other members of the CC team. So that was definitely a highlight.

And then so the second part of your question, the corporate litigation split that I'm in now. I'll quickly summarize because I don't want to take up all day, but essentially as a trainee at Clifford Chance we have split seats as well. So generally, seats are six months, but the one that I'm in now is a split seat of three months in litigation and three months in corporate, and name the tech the tech seat, and effectively in litigation I do intellectual property predominantly and then in corporate I'm mainly in tech, M&A. So for me I really enjoyed the seat, first of because I get to experience two pack series in, you know, in the span of six months, but also because you know I have quite an interest in tech and, I think, in such property space again, you know it's very technical I really liked going through a trademark and kind of reading like what sets certain trademarks apart. And I guess the highlight for me in the tech M&A team is definitely, you know, being involved in some major transactions involving some key tech players and you know, seeing that process or play out has been incredibly interesting.

07:22 - Trish (Host)

That's all sounds very cool, especially the aviation law part. I personally do not know much about it, but that sounds really, really cool and I will definitely look into that kind of a broad question. Why did you decide to work at Clifford Chance? Why did you choose Clifford Chance and what is it like to work at Clifford Chance in Hong Kong specifically?

07:43 - Chris (Host)

Okay, right, so, yeah, a few parts of that question. So why Clifford Chance for me? Firstly, I knew I wanted to work outside of Australia and I, you know, I knew that pursuing career in Hong Kong was something I wanted to try out. And so, naturally, like I think, a big thing amongst some law students at Melbourne is, you know, the Clerkship season and you know it's dreaded, or you know a lot of people talk about it a lot. But, yeah, during Clerkship season or other, I, you know, obviously, I went for Clerkships in Melbourne. But then I also took the chance to apply for the vacation schemes at firms in Hong Kong and luckily, I was able to secure a vacation scheme at Clifford Chance. And so with that, I think that was really the first step.

You know, I knew Clifford Chance is, you know it's one of the largest firms in the world, it's, you know it's quite industry, leading A lot of practice areas that I was quite interested in, and it has, you know, a huge presence in Hong Kong. And so, yeah, the first step was coming here and experiencing for myself with the vacation scheme. And then you know why I ended up choosing Clifford Chance, was it was really a comparative exercise for me, right? So, I, you know, having done the Clifford Chance vacation scheme and then doing the Clerkships, I kind of saw what it was like working with Chance and then saw what it was like working on Australia firm and then, yeah, for me personally, I wanted that international experience. I quite liked the work that I did at Clifford Chance, and I quite liked the teams that I worked with, and so, yeah, for me it was a bit of a no-brainer.

But, yeah, in terms of advice for students considering career, career, I think the first step is, I guess, knowing that these opportunities exist. I think, you know, it's quite common for a lot of students at Melbourne to not really consider opportunities outside of Melbourne and I think that that's quite a shame, you know, and that's why I quiet, you know, I really subscribe to the work GLSA is doing in kind of promoting these opportunities. But, yeah, the first step is not right. And so, you know, kind of go online, do your research, get an understanding of what you know careers are like in other jurisdictions, be it Hong Kong, be it London, be it anywhere else.

And then, you know, just kind of take that first step. You know, take, yeah and apply, apply for spots when they're available, maybe reach out and ask HR. So now, hr Bonnie, she's incredibly lovely. If you have any questions, you know, just reach out and she'll, she'll let you know, be at the steps and the timing and so forth. But yeah, I think really the advice is just kind of, yeah, go out and try and get that experience and yeah, don't be afraid to take a chance.

10:15 - Trish (Host)

Thanks, Chris, for that, For the words of wisdom. To be honest, they are, yeah, very much needed during this clerkship season. It's brutal for a lot of students. Quite easily put Just a random question what do you do outside of purchasing? Well, what are some things that you like to do to distress, or you know just nothing for a couple of minutes.

10:39 - Chris (Host)

Yeah, that's yeah, it's a solid question what I do outside of law. I think the beauty of being in Hong Kong and kind of one of the reasons why I wanted to move here is you're so close to, like, the rest of Asia and so it's actually quite not uncommon that. You know, I'll just kind of go on long weekend trips to, I guess, like Vietnam or Japan, I really love traveling and so I guess I de-stress by hopping on a plane and going somewhere else. But other than that, yeah, Hong Kong is really amazing. There's a lot of great spots for hiking if you're into that. There's a lot of really quite nice beaches. So, yeah, there's, there's lots to do and I, yeah, I'm not particularly outdoorsy, but I do I do like going to the beach on an occasion.

11:23 - Trish (Host)

So, yeah, that's pretty cool. Well, thanks, Chris, so much for your time and it was an absolute pleasure talking to you, and thanks for sharing your experience. I'm sure it will be really helpful for a lot of my friends, colleagues here at law school. But yeah, thanks for taking the time and talking to us today. Awesome, no worries, pleasure being here.