

# msl Michael Sing Lawyers

One of Australia's most versatile law firms is Queensland-based msl - michael sing lawyers, which is an award winning, full-service law firm with specialised legal services and brands developed under the msl umbrella.

The diversity of msl is illustrated by its highly-regarded brands ranging from Australian Migration Lawyers and Workplace Law Queensland to Gadens National Mortgage Services.

In 2009, msl took its specialisations to a new strategic level with the creation of its Asian Business Services, with multilingual business lawyers assisting companies and entrepreneurs doing business between Australia and Asia, with particular expertise in the China business market.

Founder and managing director, Michael Sing said the firm's focus on attracting highly experienced specialists in particular areas of law has opened up a vast range of opportunities for msl to extend their services for clients and help develop their businesses.

## CONNECTING BUSINESS

During the last 12 months, while most businesses have been experiencing difficult financial times, msl has been bolstering ties with clients, reinforcing a culture of lawyers "connecting with clients in real ways," said Mr Sing.

"We've always had a working culture of spending time with clients and understanding their business," Mr Sing said.

Mr Sing said msl encourages their lawyers get to know the particular issues affecting their clients, and no less so in difficult times.

"By talking to the CEOs, CFOs and SME owners about what is important to them in their business, our lawyers can provide them with strategic business advice," he said

"Sometimes seemingly minor issues can be of great significance," Mr Sing said. "This comes back to not only

knowledge of the law, but also close knowledge of the particular industries or markets clients are operating in.

"This industry knowledge helps strengthen relationships, build trust, and keep costs down for everyone," he said.

Mr Sing cited a case where one client revealed he had been quoted \$40,000 from a top-tier law firm for work, which msl was able to complete and achieve the desired result for about \$25,000. For a recovery of \$450,000, this was seen as excellent value.

Why the difference in price?

Mr Sing said the direct and efficient processes msl applies, coupled with inclusive fee structures and the direct relationship its lawyers had with clients, prevent miscommunications from occurring and resulted in a lower end cost for the client, and a great result.

## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

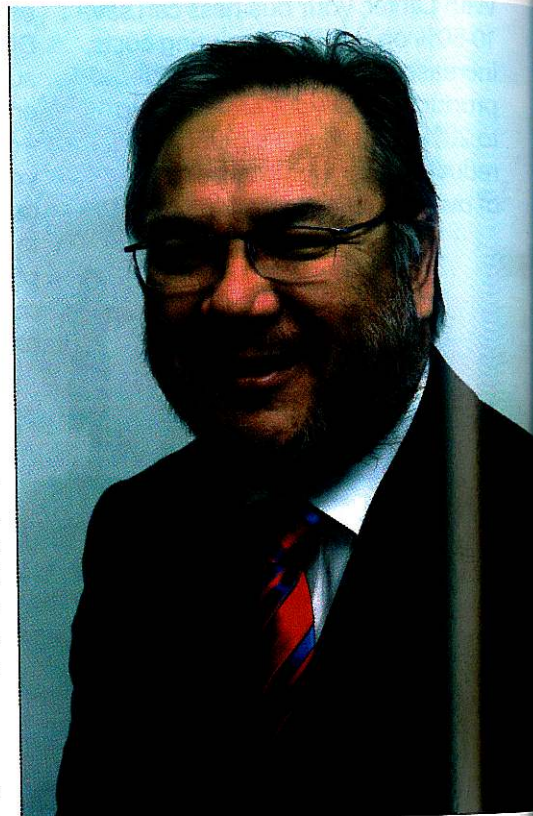
"These days, clients appreciate a lawyer who can be decisive," Mr Sing said. "And our people are recognised for that quality."

For example, he said, "In the area of workplace relations, how a dismissal is handled can make a big difference. Good lawyers can bring a wider perspective to that area and help bring about better business outcomes.

"I think good lawyers today need to counsel clients. You need an ability to look beyond the short-term decision. It is a question of short term versus long term imperatives."

Ensuring clients, including potential clients, are well informed about their rights is a role Mr Sing sees as vital for msl. For example, msl's Workplace Relations unit runs regular seminars in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast to highlight changes in the sector.

Recent changes to workplace law, such as the demise of Work Choices in favour of the new Federal Labour Government's Fair Work Act, have caused confusion and left many



Michael Sing.

employers searching for clear advice.

"We been proactive in the area, helping HR Managers and employers to understand and adapt to working in the new system. It is an important element of business success," said msl partner Stephen Hughes who heads Workplace Law Queensland, and conducts a highly active communication program of seminars and client advice newsletters and notices.

msl looks to value-add for clients, for example, through the recent Workplace Relations Seminars, on the Gold Coast and Brisbane.

"A lot of Stephen's seminars' high attendances are explained by this. It is about building a relationship with clients and keeping them informed.

"We strongly believe that when you are informed, you can make better strategic business decisions."

msl also keeps clients up-to-date

with regular publications on all areas of law, providing them with legal articles crucial to their industry.

These e-updates provide succinct information on the latest changes for all industries including property, family law, workplace relations, building and construction, sports law, insolvency and migration.

"These updates are aimed at educating our clients and business professionals so they can avoid unnecessary legal complications," said Mr Sing.

"It is about providing value, not about creating fear in clients, which is one way lawyers are sometimes taken. It is about fulfilling a need for their business and to be a trusted source of advice and information that businesses really need," he said.

### **SUPPORTING INDUSTRY**

msl has always shown a keen support of local businesses through sponsorship, industry memberships and sitting on the committee of several local organisations.

"We've worked hard to build relationships in a number of industries," Mr Sing said.

"For example, on the Gold Coast we have built relationships across a wide range of industries, including Marine, Environment, Food, Economic Development, and the Health and Medical industries."

Providing ongoing support to these industries, and other local businesses was the impetus behind supporting the Gold Coast Business Excellence Awards and a number of other initiatives.

"This is a fantastic way to nurture growing business, as well as providing recognition and support to family businesses and corporate enterprises alike."

The firm has also struck up a range of highly productive alliances to extend these benefits to clients.

These alliances include local business bankers, financial advisors, valuers, accountants and other industry experts.

"These alliances allow us to have a more collaborative approach to law, which means our clients receive a more comprehensive, efficient and effective service."

Mr Sing said, in modern business, decision makers want to work with

people their trust. "By extending msl's network of respected professionals to our clients, we are creating a mutually beneficial environment for all levels of business to operate in."

### **GROWTH IN EXPERTISE**

Constant development of skills and expertise is a fundamental at msl.

The last 12 months has seen the firm experience organic growth, especially in areas of family law, sports law, property and Asian Business Services.

Family law had been an msl mainstay in the firm's foundation years – and today msl has taken the area to new levels of expertise, with offices in Brisbane and Gold Coast.

What separates the msl family law department from other firms, is the other qualifications they bring to their roles. The skills include lawyers who have degrees in psychology, behavioural science, as well as trained mediators, who can apply that understanding to clients' situation.

Another emerging sector is sports law, an area where msl has made rapid inroads.

Growing quickly, msl already represents a top-ranked international surfer, a gold medal cyclist, kite-surfers, international motorcyclists, and consults with Queensland Netball and the Firebirds.

Head of the department is lawyer and mediator Anton A. Richardson, a keen kite surfer and accomplished athlete in his own right.

Although msl has long handled elements of sports law, Mr Sing said he had been eager to centralise the skill sets and relationships the firm had developed, and package these skills with a specialised relationship manager.

"Sports law area is about managing reputation, merchandise, image, contracts and often sportspeople need independent professional advice on career choices."

Protecting the intellectual property of their name and images is vital for sportspeople today. Also of particular importance is msl's handling of sponsorship contracts for clients.

"These areas are a really important part of their competitive careers," Mr Sing said. "They have to maximise their time at the top of their sport to provide for their future."

There is also a lot of work in structuring tax properly for income protection and rights management, he said.

"Tax efficiency is also important," Mr Sing said, "especially as many elite athletes only have a certain competitive career window where their earnings need to be managed well to support their lives after competing at the top levels. By letting msl handle their legal affairs, it lets them concentrate on what they do best ... competing and winning," said Mr Sing.

### **LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

Not content to rest on their laurels, msl has developed a suite of Asian Business Services due to increasing market demand.

With experts in Asian Business law, as well as fluent Mandarin and Cantonese speakers, msl is beginning to make waves in this growing market.

What really sets the firm apart, said Mr Sing, is the high levels of service it can offer, in particular helping Australia companies deal with business in China and vice versa – especially in the areas of IP and contract law.

"It is a huge point of difference," he said. Business introductions between Australia and China have become part of the landscape now that msl has developed its Asian Business Services. "We can press those buttons now."

One example is a steel foundry development in China that msl assisted with, especially in the IP area.

"IP is one of the big trending issues in China. It is vital for our clients, especially those going into the China market that we are ahead of the game on such issues.

"At msl, we are sensitive to the differences in business, politics and commerce for our international clients. This is why our Asian Business services gives clients direct access to lawyers who understand their culture and language, allowing for a professional and long lasting relationship," said Mr Sing.

*For more information on any of msl's legal services, visit [www.msllawyers.com.au](http://www.msllawyers.com.au)* ■

