












Australian lawyers living and practising law in different parts of the world

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Australian Financial Review, Careers blog by [Ciara Seccombe](#), published July 12 - Aug 22, 2023



Working abroad helped Helen Tung turn 'legal futurism' into a career

Ciara Seccombe

Helen Tung was in her mid-twenties and working as a litigator in London when she had a "quarter-life crisis".

The Melbourne native, who studied at the University of Sheffield in England, moved back home to work as a foreign-qualified lawyer advising clients on international law. It was then she decided the traditional route wasn't working for her.



Helen Tung now lives in the United Arab Emirates.

"I thought to myself, I could do this for the rest of my life – I could see myself, 80 years old, taking my suitcase into court – or I could be doing something different," Tung tells *The Australian Financial Review*.

She decided to merge her passion for law and technology, and attended a months-long course at the Singularity University, a highly networked institution that focuses on advancing technologies, at NASA Silicon Valley campus.

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Source: Australian Financial Review, Careers blog by [Ciara Seccombe](#), published July 12 - Aug 22, 2023



She then co-founded a satellite propulsion start-up, which “failed miserably”.

“At the bar, the way we’re trained is not [to chase] perfection, but you want to win every case. You can’t always win in the start-up world, it’s actually the polar opposite. And you really have to get out of your comfort zone, where there’s so much uncertainty,” she says.

Nevertheless, she found the experience invigorating, and it led her to an engineering course at the International Space University in Delft, in the Netherlands.

Space law is a tricky field to work in from a pure law background, and many practitioners have some form of science education.

“I remember attending a conference called The Water on the Moon, where I walked in, sat down for five minutes, and I understood nothing.”

Other parts of the program included lectures on nanotech and immortality, which Tung described as “a deep dive into the matrix”.

UAE career opportunities

After several years, including a stint in Japan, Tung moved to the United Arab Emirates to work for the UAE Space Agency, drafting new space-oriented reinsurance laws. She now has her own consultancy where she advises entrepreneurs in the space industry.

Tung says that along with a thriving expat community, the career opportunities in the UAE were the main drawcard for moving to the Middle East country.

She is also a teaching fellow at the Australian College of Law, where she teaches International Arbitration, Space Law, and ESG.

The city offers an engaging music scene and many high-quality restaurants. When she wants to escape the city, she’s only 30 minutes away from the desert, allowing her to easily enjoy the UAE’s natural landscape. The country has a hot, arid climate and in the summer temperatures range between 35 and 45. It’s much milder in winter, when temperatures are between 15 and 25.

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The UAE is a good country for her practice because the culture is entrepreneurial and embraces new technologies firmly. "They are constantly reinventing themselves," Tung says.

Booming space sector

"Space law is still very theoretical. The beauty right now is it's a booming sector, with entrepreneurs who are trying to create technologies where there are no laws," Tung says.

"You can try and adapt [existing laws]. You can say, 'that looks like consumer law', 'that looks like it could be medical device law', etc. But the beautiful thing is, we can also create new law, which is the most exciting thing for me."

Tung sees new legal issues arising from mass adoption of space travel. In particular, she hopes to develop laws around space resources before they become something we fight over.

A recent law passed in Luxembourg allows private companies to retain ownership of resources mined in space. It has attracted a lot of attention and talent to the small European nation. Tung says this could become ugly if more countries attempt to pass similar laws.

10.14AM – Aug 8, 2023



\$17,000 a month for a beginner lawyer in Switzerland. There's just one catch

Ciara Seccombe

Courtney Furner did not move to Switzerland on a whim.

After taking her oath in Perth in 2012, Furner began working as a lawyer at Norton Rose Fulbright in arbitration and litigation, before taking a job at the Supreme Court of Western Australia.



Courtney Furner has moved from Western Australia to work in Switzerland.

But during the Australian winter, she would fly across the world to attend higher education courses in international law.

“Almost every winter in Perth, I went to Europe and attended a summer school, or an academy to try and figure out if this was something that I would want to do,” Furner tells *The Australian Financial Review*.

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She has had a longstanding interest in international law and dispute settlement.

During her university studies, she spent a year abroad in Vienna, and completed a short stint as an intern at the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, a court of law that dealt with war crimes during the 1990s.

After graduating, and with a few years' work experience under her belt, Furner moved to Europe to undertake a specialised master's program in international dispute settlement in Geneva, Switzerland. The program is highly selective, and only accepts 30 students a year.

"From the minute you arrive in this program, they basically gear you up for your professional life after the master's," Furner says. "It's fun to go study abroad for a year, but if you're not going to get a job out of it, then it's a bit in vain, at least financially."

After completing the one-year program, Furner began work at LALIVE, a boutique international law firm in Zurich which specialises in international dispute resolution (and has an association with the master's program, so students may be able to intern there).



Furner has spent several years working as a lawyer overseas.



Furner says European firms are often impressed by Australians' practical skills. This is compared to many European lawyers who have to take multiple bar exams and, in some cases, complete a PhD before entering the workforce.

"By the time [they] get into the workforce, many can be academic and can lose the forest for the trees," she says. "Aussie lawyers are highly regarded for their native English language and drafting skills. We're also pretty pragmatic."

Salary and career growth

Working in Switzerland gave Furner more opportunities to work on challenging and exciting cases as counsel, arbitrator and tribunal secretary than she would have in Australia.

"[The arbitration scene] is quite developed. But Geneva, Zurich, London, Paris, Singapore, Hong Kong, these are the key [global] arbitration hubs, at least for now."

An arbitration lawyer in Australia with two full years of experience would be looking at salaries of about \$110,000 to 125,000 per year, which includes super. A lawyer with the same level of experience would be making easily double that in Switzerland.

Newly qualified lawyers in Switzerland are often paid about 10,000 Swiss francs a month (\$17,000) before tax. And they typically get paid an extra month's salary each year.

But there's a catch.

"You think like, 'Whoa, I'm gonna invite my whole family to a villa in Tuscany next year!' And then you see the rents," she laughs. Zurich's residents pay between 2000 and 5000 Swiss francs a month (about \$3500 to \$8500) in rent.

The upside is that income tax is low (though it varies across the country due to the canton system), and many small luxuries are also cheap in Switzerland.



“Cheese and wine are pretty cheap in the supermarkets, and hiking doesn’t cost anything. Going down to the farmers market is very cheap. Many Swiss mountain resorts also allow children to ski or snowboard for free on Saturdays.”

The language barrier

Despite having well-regarded credentials, it can be difficult for Australians to find work in non-English-speaking countries. Australia has a pretty poor rate of bilingualism compared to European nations. In 2016, the census showed only 10 per cent of year 12 students were studying a language.

“There is a trade-off [for employers]; between hiring a native English speaker who is a strong drafter but who may only be able to work in English, versus someone who can draft and review documents and converse with a more diverse range of clients, witnesses and experts and even teams in different languages.”

This isn’t an issue for Furner, who works in both English and German. At her firm, the team collectively speaks 24 languages, hails from 30 different countries and are qualified in 18 jurisdictions. She was also able to get a European passport through her mother and grandparents, who immigrated to Australia from Poland in the 1950s.

Without a Swiss or EU passport, it can be very difficult to land a job there, so carving out a niche, or applying for a role within an international organisation or in diplomatic circles could help.

Work-life balance

Moving to Switzerland also changed her approach to work. The country also places value on work-life balance, meaning not all Swiss lawyers feel the need to work themselves to the bone and sacrifice their leisure time for career advancement.

Outside of work, Furner’s colleagues can often be found swimming in the lakes or skiing or hiking in the alps. Her pastime of choice is hiking, which surprised her after growing up in Perth.



"I own the whole kit and caboodle," she enthused. "I have the zip-off hiking pants, the skis, the poles."

"When you go to a conference, there's a little bit of shop talk, but not so much. The conversation quickly changes to, 'Which mountain did you climb on the weekend? Where are you going this weekend? Did you catch the good snow?'"

That said, the nature of international work often requires Furner to work collaboratively with clients, experts and witnesses in different time zones, and keep more flexible hours. But, staff at her firm are discouraged from working late nights and weekends unless there is an imminent deadline.

10.21AM – Aug 1, 2023



Salary trade-off came as a surprise: life as a lawyer in Jakarta

Ciara Seccombe

Dan Trevanion, 29, was accustomed to working in a more formal office setting at Ashurst in Sydney, so when he was transferred to the firm's Jakarta office and his social life was supercharged overnight, it came as a surprise.

"[Colleagues] go out for after-work drinks, socialise, the kind of things which I think some people don't expect from a Muslim-majority country," Trevanion says.

"But like anywhere, people have different levels of faith, and they have different practices associated with that."



Dan Trevanion in Ashurst's Indonesia office.

Picking Jakarta over Sydney

Trevanion always knew he wanted a career in Indonesia. After graduating from ANU, he moved from his hometown of Canberra to work for Ashurst in Sydney, but kept an eye out

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Source: Australian Financial Review, Careers blog by [Ciara Seccombe](#), published July 12 - Aug 22, 2023



for other opportunities. His mother, an Indonesian national, inspired him to explore his roots, which led to his unconventional choice to practise law in her home country.

"I was looking ahead in Sydney and I could clearly see what my next five years were going to be like, what the promotion track would be, what the salaries and work would be as well," Trevanion says.

"But I wanted a lot more unpredictability, to have a really steep learning curve and the opportunity to step up and stand out as an individual."

Indonesia's foreign lawyer rules

He found Indonesia, however, to be a hard market to crack. The government has a strong focus on growing its domestic legal industry and places hard limits on the number of foreign lawyers allowed to work in the country.

For every foreign lawyer employed at an Indonesian office, the firm must employ four Indonesians. Trevanion's office is capped at five foreign lawyers. In fact, he says, there are fewer than 50 foreign lawyers in the country. They are also required to provide 100 hours of volunteer legal work.

"Really, the idea is that if you're going to have foreign lawyers here taking jobs from local lawyers, they should be contributing to the development of the legal scene here."

Forget the 'expat bubble' in Jakarta

The low number of foreign lawyers means it's hard to get stuck in an "expat bubble", which can easily happen in other countries.

Spending downtime in the office is common because of the relaxed, friendly atmosphere, and as a result Trevanion's colleagues have become his friends – more so than in Australia. He says his colleagues will often stay late if the weather or the traffic is bad.



"In Australia if we've got after-work plans, some people might pop home and come back later. Grab a change of clothes, come back out, meet you at seven or something a bit later," Trevanion says.

"Here, if we've got eight o'clock plans, like badminton with the firm, we're just in the office until eight o'clock, waiting until everyone's ready. In Indonesia, your work colleagues are very much your friends."

Even outside his firm, he plays basketball with other legal professionals every Sunday morning.

Less lucrative but intellectually stimulating

Trevanion says Indonesia is probably a less lucrative place to work than locations such as London, Dubai or New York, but the extra intellectual stimulation and social life in Jakarta are a worthwhile trade-off.

Trevanion works in Ashurst's projects and energy transition team. While the renewable energy transition is slower in Indonesia than in Australia, he can see a lot of structural changes on the horizon.

"There's obviously a lot of coal-fired power here, which is different to Australia which is shutting down coal-fired power stations. Here, they're looking to do a bit of a slower transition. But that means there are a lot of investment opportunities for solar, wind and others here."

For example, Indonesia wants to set up a Tesla manufacturing hub, aided by its large supply of nickel, and plans to work with Australia, which has a large supply of lithium.

"So there are plans, I think, in the policy settings to try and combine [the two countries' resources] to aid the energy transition."

10.03AM – Jul 25, 2023

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'You're expected to work harder': Life as an Aussie lawyer in Hong Kong

Ciara Seccombe

Andrew Fei, a banking and finance partner at King & Wood Mallesons, has been working in Hong Kong for a year, and he thinks about the weather more than he used to in Australia, which says a lot since he used to live in Melbourne.

Every morning during Hong Kong's typhoon season, he looks at the forecast, before working out whether he can leave for the office – or stay at home in his low-rise apartment near the beach where he can see the storms coming in from the ocean.



High-calibre work: Andrew Fei, a partner with KWM in Hong Kong.

"Most offices require staff to work from home if a typhoon signal number 8 or above or a rainstorm black signal is hoisted by the Hong Kong Observatory," Fei tells *The Australian Financial Review*.

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“When that occurs, the wind is extremely strong, the rain is very heavy and public transport becomes very crowded, inconvenient and potentially dangerous.”

A good balance between working from home and office

He occasionally also works from home for convenience, but otherwise commutes to the office most days, which is in a 48-storey office tower above a high-end shopping centre and metro station, in Hong Kong's Central business district.

Fei says the office is still an important place for the exchange of ideas, but the integration of work-from-home in the office culture is a benefit.

“The office is still a pretty special place for brainstorming and exchanging ideas, and informal chats around the water cooler are not only fun but also important for team bonding.”

Why Fei wanted to work in Hong Kong

Fei is among the many Australians who choose Hong Kong as a place to practise law.

He says Hong Kong offers young lawyers the opportunity to work on high-profile, large-scale projects that they may not have access to in Australia.

Over the past year, he has worked on his most meaningful project yet: landmark netting and collateral legal opinions for the International Swaps and Derivatives Association regarding derivatives transactions with Chinese counterparties.

Basically, the team issues very detailed legal opinions and legal analysis on the laws of their jurisdiction, and whether those laws support netting of derivative transactions. If their opinions are accepted by the industry, the firm's banking clients can start doing more deals in China, including Hong Kong.

“It allows the banks to basically enter into the market in a very cost-effective way,” Fei says. “I think it was over 350 pages of legal analysis. Over 1000 footnotes. But it was also



a very great learning process. Almost every aspect of law that I've learned, all the principles I've come across were applied and analysed in these legal opinions."

High expectations but vibrant life

As a result, he says he was able to quickly gain recognition from the global financial services sector and build a profile in the market.

The career acceleration he has experienced does come with high expectations. The local industry has a strong culture of hard work with an emphasis on top-quality legal advice.

"There is a general expectation, I think, that things move a little bit faster in Hong Kong. I think lawyers would genuinely be expected to work harder in Hong Kong, [but] I don't think it's a major transition."

Other than being exposed to high-calibre legal work, another benefit to living in Hong Kong is the vibrant life outside the office.

"[Hong Kong] has lots of iconic man-made and natural landscapes to explore, and it's the perfect location for those who like to travel on weekends. Most travel destinations in Asia are just a short flight away."

Fei has also developed a new routine. "My day begins with exercise. During the (extremely) hot and humid summer months, I go swimming in the morning and during the cooler seasons, I go for a run." He is training for the Hong Kong Marathon, which will be held in January.

How to work in Hong Kong as an Australian lawyer

As a common law jurisdiction, Hong Kong does recognise Australian legal education and qualification, but prospective practitioners will need to make extra effort to practise Hong Kong law.

Foreigners must complete the Overseas Lawyers Qualification Examination, which tests professionals on the unique aspects of the city's law. In particular, one must demonstrate

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proficiency in property and constitutional law to be admitted as a solicitor, regardless of the area they intend to practice.

The exams are held annually in October and November, and costs HK\$3300 (\$627.29) to sit. Fei spent several months preparing before sitting the test. King & Wood Mallesons supported his preparation to transfer to their Hong Kong office and paid his examination fees.

As a major trade and financial hub, the presence of competing firms from the US, UK, and other high-paying nations push up salaries in the city. Much like Singapore, lower income tax further sweetens the deal, as salaries of over HK\$200,000, the maximum income bracket, are only taxed at 17 per cent.

11.21AM – Jul 18, 2023

From mid-tier Brisbane lawyer to Linklaters partner at 36

In 2016, Andrew Poulton, then 29, was working for mid-tier firm McCullough Robertson in Brisbane as a senior associate in its litigation team. But he and his wife were ready to broaden their horizons, so he started looking for jobs in London.

Poulton applied, from Brisbane, for a managing associate role at Linklaters, a top-tier firm and member of the "Magic Circle" of elite, London-headquartered firms.



Brisbane-born Andrew Poulton with his wife and two kids in London.

The process was intense. First, there was an online assessment, then a Watson Glaser test to assess his critical thinking. After scoring highly on those, Poulton went through

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three rounds of interviews. The first two were with Linklaters partners, and the third involved a practical assessment where he had to advise on a fictional legal dilemma.

He scored the job, and he began a rapid ascent at the firm. Within six years, he had made partner.

Why London? Poulton, whose parents were both teachers, grew up in Pittsworth, a small town in Queensland, about as far away from the London business district as one could be. But he wanted to chase the complex, international disputes he just didn't have access to in Brisbane. And the much larger London salaries added to the appeal.

His specialty is crisis litigation, often around financing disputes, representing clients who face significant reputational or commercial risk. The cases he takes on these days span jurisdictions and sectors, and draw attention from the British press.

"It's quite a special experience when you're reading the *Financial Times*, and they're covering cases that you're working on," he told *The Australian Financial Review*.

Entering the firm at a mid-level role was quite tricky, Poulton says, because Linklaters accepts about 100 trainees every year, so those applying for jobs externally are competing with a significant number of lawyers vying for internal promotions.

After being hired, Poulton had to retrain in British law to work in litigation. He undertook the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Scheme (now the Solicitors Qualifying Examination) which he said was not unlike the PLT (practical legal training) process in Australia, but more complex. It took nine months to complete. The assessments covered everything from property law through to corporate law, trusts, litigation and criminal law. It cost about £6000, which was paid by Linklaters.

What are salaries like in London?

The salaries that law firms in Britain offer is a key reason London is a consistently popular destination for Australian lawyers.



Rachael Duggan, of recruitment firm Duggan+Della, says her clients typically receive offers with numbers about the same as their Australian salaries, but in British pounds – which is now worth almost double the Australian dollar.

Linklaters trainees typically start on £50,000 (\$95,900), and when they finish their training contract their pay more than doubles to £125,000.

According to an external law survey, partners at Linklaters were paid £1.87 million on average in the last financial year.

What is it like working at Linklaters?

Work hours can be long, but working for Linklaters comes with perks, Poulton says.

“There’s an on-site GP here. There are on-site restaurants and gyms. They really do invest in their staff because they recognise that it’s a high-pressure environment.”

But Poulton’s favourite perk is the team trips. “A whole global practice will often meet in a destination like Berlin or Paris. That gives us a chance to spend time with colleagues in our American or Asian offices for a couple of days. I think that’s really special,” he says.





Andrew Poulton moved to London with his wife six years ago.

One of the hardest parts of Poulton's time in Britain was during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially because it coincided with the arrival of his second child.

"I was allowed in hospital for one hour with my wife when my son arrived, which was immensely difficult," he says.

"But I had six months paid paternity leave in that period, to help my family get through the pandemic, which was so important because we have no relatives over here."

Poulton took the full six months to support his wife and spend time with his family. He says most men at Linklaters take between three and six months as well, a move which studies show helps reduce long-term gender inequality in families.

8.28AM – Jul 12, 2023



Top pay taxed at 22 per cent: Life as a lawyer in Singapore

Ciara Seccombe

A decade ago, corporate lawyer Faith Sing was at a crossroads. Would her next career move be in Australia, the UK or Singapore?

Originally from Singapore, Sing moved to South Australia as a teenager with her family. She went to school in Adelaide and then completed a law degree there.



Faith Sing (pictured far left) and her team at fsLaw.

She then worked for 15 years at several top firms in Sydney and London, including Freehills, Gilbert & Tobin and Linklaters. But in 2013, despite knowing she would have to retrain if she moved back to Singapore, Sing decided that was where she wanted to raise her family.

Why Faith chose Singapore over Australia

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Source: Australian Financial Review, Careers blog by [Ciara Seccombe](#), published July 12 - Aug 22, 2023



"I came [back] for the education system and the opportunity for my children to grow up a little closer to Asia," she says. She and her husband chose to move when their kids were aged five and eight, before they were too old to adjust.

Sing believes having closer ties to Asia will give them long-term advantages due to changes in economic and cultural flows over the coming decades. And she wanted them to grow up in a bilingual environment.

For those with children, the Singapore education system may be a drawcard – Singapore kids regularly top PISA surveys, and two Singapore schools are among the top 10 global schools for entry to Oxbridge.

Sing then spent one year gaining certification before opening her own boutique firm, fsLaw. It specialises in business law advice and employs five lawyers, with plans to expand next year.

Working as an Australian lawyer in Singapore

Singapore is "quite strict" about who can practise its domestic law, says Sing.

Lawyers with Australian credentials and two or more years of relevant legal experience can become full practitioners in Singapore by passing the Singapore Bar exam parts A and B. If you are a citizen or permanent resident, the two years' experience requirement may be waived.

Australian lawyers can otherwise be employed by a Singapore-based company or law firm, if they obtain a limited licence through registering with the Legal Services Regulatory Authority. Under this arrangement, you cannot practise Singapore law but can offer legal advice in Australian or international law.

Salaries and income tax

Salaries in Singapore aren't as predictable as the US, where firms typically follow the Cravath Scale. But recruiter Jonathan Walmsley of Marsden says that Singapore-based lawyers with two years' experience employed at major international firms earn about

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\$S215,000 (around \$A239,000) compared to between \$110,000 and \$125,000 (including super) in Australia.

While Singaporean salaries don't have the eye-popping numbers you might find elsewhere, Sing and Walmsley says there is hidden value.

"Tax is a big consideration," says Sing. After tax, it's probably "pretty competitive" with remuneration in London or New York, she adds.

The highest bracket in Singapore begins at \$S320,001 and is taxed at 22 per cent. Walmsley estimates lawyers at major international firms with eight years' experience would be earning in this bracket. In contrast, Australia's top bracket begins at \$180,001 and is taxed at \$53,325, plus 45 per cent of anything over that amount.

Work/life balance in Singapore

Sing also says starting her own firm has allowed her to spend more time with her family.

This became a priority for her after working at a major firm in Sydney, where she typically left for work before her kids were up, and couldn't guarantee she would arrive home before they went to bed.

"Our law firm is quite different – we all work remotely and have done so before COVID. That means no matter how hard I'm working, unless I'm travelling and away, I see my kids every day and have done so for 10 years."

There's another reason Sing can devote herself to her work without sacrificing leisure time, or time with her family.

"I have had a live-in helper for 10 years now. Mine manages the household chores – cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, finding contractors to fix things."

This is not uncommon in Singapore, where one in five households have this arrangement.



As for the culture, Sing says your mileage will vary depending on what experiences you seek out. Singapore hosts firms from all around the world, which primarily reflect the culture of the home country, as well as the attitudes of the firm in question. Ms Sing advises Australians who are expecting a cultural change to actively chase new experiences.

“Get out of the office, go to different events, go look at how people do things differently, go into that melting pot and chase that.”

Are you an Australian lawyer overseas? If you'd like to share your story, email explainers@afrc.com

12.21PM – Jul 4, 2023



Salary a 'significant motivation': Life as an Aussie lawyer at Amazon in Seattle

Ciara Seccombe

In 2017, 29-year-old Daniella Phair was working as a media and technology solicitor at King & Wood Mallesons, when she received a surprising message on LinkedIn.

American Amazon executives were flying to Australia to find a new batch of recruits to take back with them to the tech company's headquarters in Seattle. Might she be interested, the recruiter asked?

It was a "cold-call LinkedIn situation", says Phair, but she decided to give it a shot.



Daniella Phair worked at Amazon in Seattle for four years. **Supplied**

The recruitment process for a job at Amazon

It's part of the US tech giant's Australian recruitment program, which takes place most years (depending on business performance and needs), and the brainchild of a legal VP at the company, who also came from Australia.

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The interview experience was tough, says Phair. Hiring involved a phone screen and written assessment before she progressed to hour-long interviews, which were held in-person in Australia by top executives. In the end, around twenty Australian lawyers were hired, and Phair was one of them.

She describes her Amazon salary as a “significant motivation to move”.

Her first role at the e-commerce giant was as corporate counsel supporting Amazon's consumer cloud offering, Amazon Photos. In this role, she was responsible for day to day product support on a global scale, including all feature roll-outs, customer escalation and media inquiries.

What it's like to work as a lawyer at Amazon HQ

Phair says the standards are high at Amazon, and the work very fast-paced. She put in similar hours to her work at King & Wood Mallesons.

But she found some key differences between in-house and law firm work.

“[In-house] you provide the advice, and then you are also responsible for the follow through – and you also probably have a bigger emphasis on trying to look around corners and anticipate legal needs.” Phair tells *The Australian Financial Review*.

Cross department co-operation is essential, and an ability to network will take you far, she adds.

Working at Amazon also came with unique, canine perk, something that definitely wouldn't fly at a top-tier law firm.

“At least in the Seattle offices at Amazon, dogs are allowed by default!” says Phair. “They aren't meant to come to meetings but are allowed to be in the desk environment, which is open-plan.”

Socially, she found Americans slightly more formal than her colleagues in Australia.



"It took some time to kind of build up to that camaraderie, the 'Let's go for drinks' vibe that you get more easily in Australia."

Phair spent four years in Seattle, working in several roles, but she recently returned to Melbourne to take up a legal role with Tennis Australia.

How to get an in-house legal job in the US

She used the E3 visa scheme, a US visa available only to Australians with a job offer. "I couldn't have worked at a law firm or any other company," she says, "I had to be a lawyer at Amazon."

Normally, Australian lawyers in the US must pass the relevant state's bar exam or receive 'Admission on Motion', but in-house corporate lawyers like Phair do not need to sit a bar exam at all.

Working in-house at a major corporation can be a lucrative move in a lawyer's early career, according to recruiter Jason Elias of Elias Recruitment.

It is easier to get a job working in-house overseas if you already work in-house at an Australian branch of your chosen company, though it is possible to move from law firm work to a company overseas, Elias says.

10.23AM – Jun 28, 2023



Say goodbye to your morning coffee run: life as an Aussie lawyer in Tokyo

When Ashurst senior associate Dario Aloe moved from Melbourne to Tokyo on a client secondment last year, there was one particular habit he had to break.

He had to kiss his morning coffee run goodbye. “It’s not really the done thing here,” Aloe tells *The Australian Financial Review*. Other than that he has found the culture comparable to work in an Australian firm.



Dario Aloe, a senior associate at Ashurst, is working in Tokyo.

Aloe, 31, has been working for the last 10 months for a Japanese general trading company, Sojitz Corporation, which has a wide business remit, including manufacturing, buying and selling, and exporting and importing goods.

“I found that in my team, there is respect for work-life balance – that taking leave is encouraged, and flexible working practices are a non-issue,” says Aloe, 31.



How Tokyo compares to other big cities

According to Jonathan Walmsley of recruiting firm Marsden, it is harder to get hired to work in Tokyo than in London or the US. It comes down to scale of the market and the size of the international firms in Tokyo affecting the number of positions available in general.

As an international trade hub, there are firms and companies from around the world with offices in Tokyo, meaning that there are opportunities for non-Japanese-speaking lawyers as well. Lawyers working in project finance and corporate law are in areas with the highest demand.

"An Australian corporate lawyer for example might have five to twenty-five options in London for every one or two places in Tokyo," says Walmsley. "Tokyo is a unique market, but we always have interesting roles to work on."

The pay in Japan is generally higher than most global locations and many US firms offer the same rates of pay as in New York, and according to Walmsley. Even with non-US firms, Australians working in Japan typically can expect to earn at least on par with a London salary, which is a significant step up from Australian salaries.

Cost of living

For Aloe, the cost of living has been comparable to Australia. City rents are more expensive, but he says the food is much cheaper.

"I found certain expenses (such as rent) to be much higher than what I would expect in Melbourne – though I chose to live close to the office and didn't compromise on space," Aloe says.

"Culturally it is more common to eat out for lunch in Tokyo than in Melbourne, with lunches usually around AUD \$10 – the quality of food in Japan is so high that you almost feel guilty when paying this price."

How to work as a foreign lawyer

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There are several options if you want to work as an Australian lawyer in Japan.

You can act as a registered foreign lawyer in an international firm, or apply to be a *gaikokuho jimusho bengoshi*, which allows you to offer Australian law advisory services while in Japan, so long as you have been qualified in Australia for at least three years, have no criminal record, and have the means to compensate a wronged client for damages.

Japan operates in a civil law framework, unlike Australia. Due to the difference in law and legal systems, Japan does not recognise Australian legal qualifications like other common law countries do. So if an individual wishes to practise Japanese law, they must pass the local bar exam in Japanese language.

Aloe says that because he is working for an international company, he didn't need extra training, or to be fluent in the language.

"Admittedly, I should have learned more, but being able to say "ohayo gozaimasu" [good morning] and "shitsurei shimasu" [said when leaving the office] seems to go a long way," he says.

Want to know more about Japan?

[An insider's guide to the best places to ski in Japan](#) | With its deep powder snow, weak yen and a host of hotel upgrades, there has never been a better time to book a ski trip to this part of the world.

[Visiting Japan? Get some foodie tips from Noma chef Rene Redzepi](#) | As the famed restaurant's pop-up draws to a close, the top cook reflects on the hidden beauty and edible treasures of this mystical Japanese city.

[Top city tips from our man in Tokyo](#) | The Japanese capital is a quirky blend of contradictions. Here's our snap guide to this bustling and intriguing city.

10.21AM – Jun 28, 2023

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Source: Australian Financial Review, Careers blog by [Ciara Seccombe](#), published July 12 - Aug 22, 2023



Why Australian lawyers want to live and work overseas

Ciara Seccombe

Welcome to our new weekly blog that features Australian lawyers who are living and practising law in different parts of the world.

We've decided to showcase legal professionals at all levels of their careers – with different areas of expertise – as well as share the practical details, such as what you can expect to earn, the cost of living, cultural differences, and just how hard (or easy) it is to get a legal job in a particular city, or country.

That's because practising overseas is basically a rite of passage for Australian lawyers: it can be lucrative; it enhances the CV; and, in some countries, it's not that hard to get into practice.

"Experience in markets other than Australia is valuable for many reasons, including developing your legal expertise, the different kinds of clients and working cultures you're exposed to," says Renae Lattey, chief executive partner of global law firm King & Wood Mallesons.

She says lawyers with overseas experience are considered more valuable upon return.

"We want people to go overseas and master their legal craft," Lattey says, adding: "Of course, we want them to come back to work for us."

Recruiter Rachael Duggan, of Duggan+Della, says the international community also views Australians as a valuable investment. Australian law schools are highly regarded, as is the early career experience lawyers receive at firms here, she says.

But, of course, what demand looks like for Australian lawyers depends on the country and the area of practice.

Are you an Australian lawyer overseas? If you'd like to share your story, email explainers@afr.com

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