



LEGALINK

INTERNATIONAL BUT PERSONAL

Gordon Grieve

— Piper Alderman

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Are there any updates regarding your team or partners? Is there any important news?

In the last 12 months, we have reviewed our values and areas of focus. Our values are hard work/discipline, collegiality, respect, expertise, innovation/forward thinking and trust. Our teams have also reformed around key practice areas of Corporate, Commercial Litigation, Real Estate, Employment Relations, IP & IT and Infrastructure & Projects. These changes have helped attract some top talent in the legal profession. In the past 12 months, we have had 8 new partners join the firm in the areas of Corporate, Intellectual Property & Technology, Employment Relations and Construction. We are also bringing on a significant number of new partners in Adelaide in banking and finance in the coming months.

We are focusing our efforts on sectors which are strong in Australia. Obviously the mining sectors where we have been a very strong firm for a long time, and agriculture, and we have been doing quite a lot of work in the intellectual property area, particularly in the pharmaceuticals and biotechnology sectors.

Where do you think your firm is heading? Will your firm be growing or rather investing in its own resources?

We will certainly be growing. As I mentioned earlier, we've had a number of new partners join the firm recently and our aim is to continue that growth through lateral hires.

Piper Alderman is an independent Australian law firm and although we have considered the path of the international merger, we believe that at this stage there is a place for independent firms. That is why we see our association with Legalink as an important part of our strategy.

Is there any recent case you would like to talk about? Interesting or special?

Recently, we assisted a Chinese citrus fruit producer (Dongfang Modern Agricultural Holding Group) to list on the Australian Stock Exchange. Now that the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement has been signed, we're expecting a lot more activity of this kind. Inbound investment in the agricultural space is certainly a booming area and we have also assisted a number of Chinese companies with acquisitions of agricultural businesses in Australia.

One of the most significant events for 2015 for Piper Alderman was hosting the Legalink conference here in Sydney. We thoroughly enjoyed welcoming Legalink members to our beautiful country and, judging by all the feedback that we've received, the conference was a huge success. It was a very long way for everyone to come, but I think those that made the effort got a lot out of it and had a fair bit of fun at the same time!

What are you personally working on at this moment?

Personally I am working on some quite large litigation in Melbourne. There was a collapse of Babcock and Brown group which was a very large international investment banking manager of infrastructure in Europe, America and Australia and I am working interestingly on a float of a litigation funder.

Litigation funding is something that has become very important to our practice and is becoming more important throughout Australia. It is something that Legalink can be involved in as funders are becoming more prevalent not just in the common law jurisdictions but also in the civil jurisdictions. The Volkswagen case is a point that might be interesting for Legalink people to look at as class actions are being run against Volkswagen all over the world and different courses of action are being looked at by different people and litigation funders are right in the forefront of that, particularly class action type of funds.

In Australia, we have a strong class action jurisdiction, stronger than say in the UK but not as strong as in the US. Of course, class actions are not as prevalent in Europe or South America but we can see that in the future it will become so. It is an area that we have spoken about at Legalink conferences and something where the litigators can certainly exchange information and assist each other.

Do you have an example of cooperation with another Legalink member?

I think the most recent and interesting case was the one that we worked on for Mishcon de Reya. Mishcon's client, Frutarom Industries, acquired an Australian company that specialises in taste and fruit technology. Legalink's New Zealand firm was also involved because the target company had manufacturing facilities there. That case was discussed at the recent conference in Australia and it was a good example of being able to do something quickly and efficiently across the quite extensive time zones.

Which jurisdictions are the most relevant to your firm?

We work with clients all over the world, but there is a lot of investment activity with Asian countries; in particular China, Japan, Singapore, and Hong Kong. We also do a lot of work with England and the US, probably due to historical reasons because a lot of investors in Australia are still located there.

We are also starting to see a lot more interaction with South America which is interesting. For example, we're seeing a number of Australian mining companies looking at operations in South America at the moment.

Of course I should also mention Europe. In particular, we have been doing quite a bit with Rittershaus recently – so Germany is important to us.

But we really work with any country that has companies who want to invest in Australia. As people who attended the Sydney conference would have learned, Australia is a great place for investment – in particular in the areas of energy & resources, agribusiness and infrastructure. We have a lot more incoming investment than we do outgoing investment.

What importance do you see in attending conferences?

The first conference I attended was the one in Prague and we have been going to most conferences since. As an active member of the network, we have taken the view that it is very important to attend the conferences.

If you are going to make the most of Legalink then you really need to know the people and attend the conferences.

At the conference that we have just had in Sydney, we took the view that we would get as many of our partners involved as possible.

It should be more than just the one or two people who attend the conferences who have got links into Legalink.

We brought partners from Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and obviously, Sydney, along to the conference so that they got to know the Legalink delegates. Also, before the conference, we made an effort to contact all the delegates so that when people arrived they had a point of contact at Piper Alderman and they were already talking with us about issues of interest to them.

We think it is very important to get involved in all of the Legalink groups and to exchange information. The more that happens the more likely it is that work will be engendered.

What can we do better in Legalink?

It is difficult because of the small size of the administrative group in Legalink. But I would like to see more people being involved in the Practice Groups and more information shared via the website. It would be very useful to see more newsletters from people around the world in relation to their various areas of expertise than we do at the moment.

More involvement and interaction between meetings is what I think we can do better. Perhaps we could have more telephone conferences and video conferences? That said, as those people who came to Sydney would know, we are very long way from them anyway and to have these conversations in different time zones is quite difficult.

The world is getting smaller with better communication but the tyranny of distance and tyranny of time is still a problem.

We could try to make more use of modern communication to have more interaction between Legalink members.

The other thing that I think we might be able to do better is the regional groups. Perhaps we could look at having regional group meetings. I know that this is something that was discussed during the conference in Sydney, so there is obviously an appetite for it.

What is your favorite thing to do in your spare time?

If I had to choose one thing it would be watching the cricket – as long as Australia is winning!

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Thank you.