



PAUL SILLS

Nationality: New Zealander

Languages: English



Paul Sills is recognised as a leading international arbitrator and mediator with more than three decades of experience resolving high-value and complex disputes across multiple jurisdictions. He is frequently appointed in matters involving multiple parties, overlapping legal systems, and cross-sector commercial issues, reflecting his reputation for navigating disputes at the highest level.

Before establishing himself as a full-time neutral, Paul practised as a civil and commercial barrister with a strong international focus, advising on disputes in aviation, construction, infrastructure, engineering, energy, and technology. His legal career was complemented by senior executive roles as CEO and Director of international businesses, giving him rare first-hand insight into the commercial and governance realities that underpin many disputes.

Paul has acted as a company receiver in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis, managing the restructuring and resolution of finance and construction company failures. As Managing Director and CEO of an international construction group, he worked directly on large-scale projects involving state-owned enterprises, global investors, and joint venture partners.

He is an established thought leader, regularly lecturing and publishing in the UK and globally on arbitration, mediation, fintech, climate change, energy transition, and complex infrastructure disputes. He has taught international commercial arbitration at Westminster University Law School and delivers fellowship training for arbitrators and mediators worldwide. Paul is a Fellow of leading arbitral institutions including CIArb and has trained at the Harvard Program on Negotiation, with a focus on complex, multi-party, and cross-cultural negotiations.

Paul's standing in the field has been recognised internationally. Since 2022, *Who's Who Legal* has ranked him as a Global Leader in Mediation, and he was appointed Chairperson of the European Commission's arbitration panel for EU trade disputes.

With extensive experience in both common law and civil law systems, and in both institutional and ad hoc proceedings, Paul brings a rare combination of legal expertise, commercial acumen, and cross-cultural sensitivity. This positions him among the global elite of dispute resolution practitioners and makes him exceptionally well placed to accept appointments in major international arbitrations and mediations.

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Sector Expertise

- Mediation and Dispute Boards
- International Commercial Arbitration
- Construction, Engineering & Infrastructure
- Energy, Natural Resources & Energy Transition
- Marine, Shipping & Superyachts
- Aviation & Aerospace
- Fintech, Banking & Cryptocurrency

Mediation & Dispute Boards

Paul Sills is an internationally recognised mediator with extensive experience in the resolution of complex, multi-party, and cross-border disputes. With over 500 mediations and facilitated negotiations to his name, Paul is trusted by parties and institutions alike to guide high-value disputes to pragmatic, durable outcomes.

Drawing on his senior commercial background as a CEO, director, and company receiver, Paul brings a rare ability to bridge legal, financial, and operational perspectives. This commercial insight allows him to help parties uncover workable solutions in situations where disputes are often considered “*too complex*,” “*too large*,” or “*too entrenched*” for mediation.

His practice spans the full spectrum of commercial mediation work—from shareholder and joint venture disputes to major construction, infrastructure, energy, aviation, marine, and financial services matters—regularly involving parties from multiple jurisdictions. He is also at the forefront of early dispute prevention, applying facilitation techniques and dispute boards to support long-term projects and strategic commercial relationships.

Paul’s skills and leadership in mediation have been recognised internationally. He has been consistently ranked by *Who’s Who Legal* as a Global Leader in Mediation and was named *Mediator of the Year* in New Zealand. He is widely regarded as a leading practitioner of a modern, sophisticated style of mediation, particularly suited to high-value international disputes.

Testimonials reflect his reputation:

- “*Unsurprisingly, he is one of APAC’s leading mediators.*”
- “*Paul is the leading practitioner of a new style of mediation which is more sophisticated and more effective for complex commercial disputes than anything else.*”

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International Commercial Arbitration

Paul Sills has decades of experience acting as arbitrator and previously as lead counsel in complex commercial disputes across multiple jurisdictions. His work has spanned both common law and civil law systems, under regimes based on the UNCITRAL Model Law, giving him the versatility to operate seamlessly in international proceedings.

His arbitral practice covers the full range of high-value commercial disputes, including joint ventures, partnership and shareholder conflicts, banking and finance, investment disputes, mergers and acquisitions, and contract claims. These have arisen across diverse industries such as agriculture, dairy, forestry, construction (both residential and commercial), freight and logistics, and large-scale infrastructure projects.

Paul's perspective is reinforced by his senior executive background as CEO and Director of international companies, particularly in freight and transportation, which has more recently intersected with his work on energy transition and ESG matters. Notably, he facilitated an 18-month cross-border negotiation concerning a solar energy dispute, bringing together his commercial acumen and dispute resolution expertise to achieve pragmatic solutions.

Construction, Engineering & Infrastructure

Paul Sills has extensive international experience in resolving disputes across the construction, engineering, and infrastructure sectors. His arbitration and mediation work covers the full range of issues that arise on major projects, including delay and disruption claims, misrepresentation, overpayments and abatement, breach and damages, change orders, fluctuations, force majeure and frustration, limitation issues, extensions of time, defect claims, and mobilisation disputes.

He is highly familiar with the use of standard forms such as JCT, NEC, and FIDIC, as well as bespoke and ad hoc contracts, in projects ranging from superyacht construction to high-rise commercial developments, transport infrastructure, and large-scale public works.

Paul's expertise is also grounded in direct commercial and governance experience. He acted for the receivers in the insolvency of Hartner Construction Ltd—at the time the largest construction company failure in New Zealand—and has served on the advisory board of one of the country's largest infrastructure providers, advising on relationships with government, the reform of national water services, and oversight of both new-build and long-term maintenance projects.

For more than five years, Paul also chaired the Master Builders Association Standards Committee, adjudicating a wide spectrum of disputes, from hundreds of thousands to tens of millions in value. This blend of high-level adjudicative experience, commercial acumen, and technical familiarity ensures Paul is exceptionally well placed to act as arbitrator or mediator in major international construction and infrastructure disputes.

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Energy, Natural Resources & Energy Transition

Paul Sills has extensive international experience in energy and natural resources disputes, spanning both traditional oil & gas projects and the rapidly developing fields of renewables, climate change, and ESG-driven claims. His practice combines deep familiarity with large-scale energy infrastructure with cutting-edge expertise in disputes arising from the global energy transition.

Paul has been appointed in disputes involving exploration and production, power generation, cross-border energy supply contracts, and renewable energy projects including solar, wind, and hydro. His work extends to matters of regulatory change, local content requirements, climate-related obligations, and investment treaty claims, where energy transition policies intersect with investor rights and state interests.

He brings first-hand commercial and facilitative experience to this sector, having led an 18-month cross-border negotiation concerning a solar energy dispute and advised on ESG and sustainability issues as CEO and Director in the international freight and transportation sector. This combination of practical leadership and arbitral experience equips him to address both the commercial and policy dimensions of modern energy disputes.

Paul regularly lectures and publishes internationally on climate change, ESG, and the energy transition, and is increasingly recognised as a thought leader in how arbitration and mediation can be used to resolve disputes at the forefront of the global shift to sustainable energy.

Marine, Shipping & Superyachts

Paul brings deep and varied experience to disputes in the marine and shipping sector, spanning from traditional maritime claims to the highly specialised world of superyacht construction and finance. His work encompasses shipbuilding and refit disputes, charterparty issues, international ship arrests, cargo claims, leasing arrangements, and cross-border resource disputes.

His background is distinguished by both operational and commercial insight. Paul began his career in the Royal New Zealand Air Force, conducting search and rescue operations and Exclusive Economic Zone patrols, giving him a first-hand understanding of the maritime environment. He later developed extensive expertise in the commercial aspects of the sector, advising on complex superyacht construction, chartering, and financing matters.

Paul has also acted in high-value insolvency-related disputes, including serving as receiver for Caterpillar Finance (Asia Pacific) in the receivership and sale of an international superyacht business. This blend of operational experience, commercial knowledge, and arbitral practice positions Paul as a trusted neutral for international maritime and shipping disputes under both institutional rules and ad hoc frameworks, including LMAA proceedings.

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Fintech, Banking & Cryptocurrency

Paul Sills has significant experience in banking and financial disputes, acting as arbitrator, mediator, receiver, and counsel in matters involving complex debt structures, securitisation, and cross-border financing. His work includes acting as receiver of a failed finance company in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis and overseeing one of the largest joint venture receiverships in New Zealand's history, between a domestic forestry enterprise and CITIC in China.

He is regularly engaged in disputes requiring the resolution of competing interests among international banking consortia, where careful analysis of layered debt and security arrangements is critical.

Fintech is a particular area of specialist focus. Paul publishes and lectures internationally on the resolution of disputes involving smart contracts, cryptocurrency, and distributed ledger technologies. He has been appointed arbitrator in fintech disputes across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, including cases concerning the enforceability of smart contracts and digital asset transactions.

Paul's combination of financial restructuring expertise, regulatory awareness, and hands-on arbitral experience in cutting-edge fintech disputes positions him as one of the few neutrals with genuine cross-over authority between traditional banking and emerging digital finance.

Aviation & Aerospace

Paul Sills has extensive international experience in aviation and aerospace disputes, covering the full range of commercial, regulatory, technical, and liability issues. His work spans cargo claims, aircraft leasing and financing, engineering and maintenance disputes, insolvency and restructuring, insurance, and accident/fatality claims, often arising in cross-border contexts.

Key highlights include:

- Acting for the International Air Transport Association (IATA) for several years in disputes under the Warsaw Convention and related frameworks governing international air travel.
- Representing major airlines, including Air New Zealand, Singapore Airlines, Ansett Australia, and Air Pacific, in matters ranging from cargo and cartel allegations to engineering defects, refit/product failures, leasing disputes, financing, and insolvency. His work included the Voluntary Administration of *Ansett Australia* and the government-led recapitalisation of *Air New Zealand*.
- Advising secured creditors in multiple airline receiverships/insolvencies, including the recovery of leased aircraft and related cross-border enforcement proceedings.
- Acting for global aviation insurers and underwriters in both the general aviation and airline markets, including complex liability disputes and representation at inquests into aviation fatalities.
- Handling aviation disasters and accident disputes across the Asia-Pacific and internationally, involving both technical failures and operational issues.

Paul's practice is underpinned by his early career in the Royal New Zealand Air Force, where he served as a Navigator and Tactical Coordinator on Orion P3K aircraft. In this role, he conducted maritime patrols, defence

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operations, and Exclusive Economic Zone enforcement, and gave evidence in prosecutions for illegal fishing in New Zealand waters. This defence and aerospace grounding provides Paul with unique insight into the operational, engineering, and regulatory environment of the aviation and aerospace sectors—experience he now applies directly to the resolution of high-value international disputes.

Experience

International and Domestic Arbitration

- Experienced in both Civil and Common Law jurisdictions.
- Numerous Ad Hoc and Arbitral Institute appointments on large-scale construction and infrastructure disputes and Energy Projects.
- Several Arbitral Institute appointments in the UAE on a number of infrastructure project disputes.
- Emergency arbitrator proceedings for SIAC in relation to a crypto currency dispute.
- LMAA administered marine disputes including charter agreements, superyacht charters, sale and purchase agreements.
- 60+ appointments as both sole arbitrator and Tribunal member under the UK Arbitration Act 1996.
- Hong Kong Trade Arbitration.
- Sole arbitrator in several commercial arbitrations under the Arbitration Act 1996 (NZ).
- Chairperson of the Registered Master Builders Association of New Zealand complaints committee – 30 determinations issued.
- New Zealand Regional Councils – determinations issued into the conduct of elected officials.
- Acted as senior counsel in 5 International arbitrations involving disputes over superyacht construction contracts.

International and Domestic Mediation (Examples Only)

- Conducted 400+ commercial mediations (ranging from one day to 2 year+ projects)
- Property Joint Venture - This matter involved a significant property development joint venture involving three large scale residential developments.
- Government Department and Commercial Supplier - This dispute involved a government department who regularly engages with commercial suppliers.
- Shareholders Disputes - I have worked on numerous shareholder disputes
- Transborder Public Company Dispute - This dispute involved a publicly listed company in New Zealand and a publicly listed company in California.
- New Zealand Treaty of Waitangi compensation negotiations.
- Submarine cable dispute negotiations between two South Pacific Island Nations.

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Commercial Litigation

- Lead counsel in a superyacht refit dispute in the Melbourne High Court.
- Lead counsel acting for the Fijian Tax Authority in a transfer pricing claim against Fiji Water (estimated damages \$1.6 billion Fijian dollars).
- Lead counsel on numerous disputes for IATA - New Zealand and Pacific islands.
- Lead counsel acting for the receivers of Hartner Construction Limited (at the time the largest construction failure in New Zealand).
- Lead counsel acting for the receivers of Carich Training (largest education provider receivership in New Zealand).
- Junior counsel acting for New Zealand public company in partnership dispute with CITIC (\$2.6 billion).
- Junior counsel acting for Air New Zealand on the collapse of Ansett Australia.
- Junior counsel acting on behalf of Tainui - the first Maori land settlement with the New Zealand government – value \$170 million.
- Lead and Jr counsel on numerous aviation disasters including loss of Ansett New Zealand Dash-8, Southern Air fatality, Whanganui Aeroworks fatality.

Academic & Professional Qualifications

Professional Positions

- Westminster University Visiting Lecturer – teaching the LLM International Commercial Arbitration Module
- AMINZ Director of Professional Studies (Mediation, Adjudication and Arbitration).
- Independent Arbitrator & Mediator – Arbitra International (London, Washington DC, Abu Dhabi)
- Commercial Barrister (since 2004)
- Arbitration Fellow
- Mediation Fellow
- Independent Director

Previous Positions:

- 2019 - 2023 - International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Mediation Competition Adjudicator (Paris).
- 2022 – 2023 – Vis Moot Judge Vienna (plus UK and Southeast Asia Pre-Moots).
- 2020 - International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Mediation Competition Adjudicator (Paris).
- 2019 – International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Mediation Competition Adjudicator (Melbourne).
- Chairman of the Registered Master Builders Association of New Zealand Code of Conduct Committee.
- New Zealand Regional Councils – Investigations and determinations on complaints concerning the conduct of elected officials.
- Netball New Zealand disciplinary committee Chairperson.
- 2008 – 2018: Company Receiver under the New Zealand Receiverships Act 1993.
- 2006 – 2008: Managing Director & CEO – Sensation Yachts Group.
- 1993 – 2004: Litigation Solicitor.

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- 1983 – 1991: Navigator Royal New Zealand Air Force.

Academic Qualifications

- 2020 - Arbitrators & Mediators Institute of New Zealand (AMINZ) Fellowship – arbitration.
- 2020 - Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CI Arb) Fellowship.
- 2019 - Arbitrators & Mediators Institute of New Zealand (AMINZ) Fellowship - mediation.
- 2018 - Harvard Program on Negotiation Advanced Mediation Course - Mediating Complex and Multi-party Disputes.
- 1995 - University of Auckland, LLB (Hons).
- 1984 - Queens Commission – Royal New Zealand Air Force.

Professional Associations & Recognitions

- Member of the London Court of International Arbitration (LCIA).
- Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) Panel of Arbitrators.
- Dubai International Arbitration Centre (DIAC) Panel of Arbitrators.
- arbitrateAD Abu Dhabi Panel of Arbitrators.
- Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre (HKIAC) Panel of Arbitrators.
- European Commission trade agreement dispute Arbitration Panel – Chairperson.
- Arbitration Panel Member - Shanghai Arbitration Commission.
- ADGM Arbitration Centre – Arbitration and Mediation Panels.
- ADGM Arbitration Centre – Investor/State Mediation Panel.
- AIAC Panel of Arbitrators and Mediators.
- Maldives International Arbitration Centre List of Arbitrators.
- Member of the Dispute Resolution Foundation Board (DRFB)
- Member of the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA)
- Member of Arbitration Ireland
- Member of the International Bar Association (IBA)
- London Maritime Arbitrators Association – supporting member.
- Civil Mediation Council (UK) – registered member.
- Society of Construction Law UK – member.
- Distinguished Fellow – International Academy of Mediators.
- Society of Adjudicators – member
- UK Commercial Rent (Coronavirus) Act 2022 Arbitration panel.
- UK ABTA Arbitration panel
- Prime Dispute – Arbitration, Dispute Board, Emergency Arbitrator and Mediation Panels. Certified Educator.
- Maritime Mediation Centre Panel – <https://www.maritimemediationcenter.com/>
- Arbitrators and Mediators Institute of New Zealand Inc (AMINZ) – Mediation, Arbitration and Farm Debt Mediation Panels.
- Immediation – Arbitration and Mediation Panels.
- CODR – Arbitration and Mediation Panels.
- Fairway Resolution Limited – Arbitration and Mediation Panels.
- New Zealand Ministry of Justice Funded Dispute Resolution Scheme – Arbitration and Mediation Panels.

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- Franchise Association of New Zealand – Mediation Panel
- Marine Industry of New Zealand – Mediation Panel
- New Zealand Law Society – Early Resolution Service and Mediation Panel.
- New Zealand Sport and Recreation Complaints & Mediation Service – Mediation Panel

Publications, Articles & Thought Leadership

Publications

- 2023 – Mediation Beyond Covid – contributing author (Amazon best seller).
- 2022 - 2024 - Lexology Getting the Deal Through (Arbitration Edition) – New Zealand Chapter
- Author of the country chapter on Arbitration for New Zealand, Lexology - 2022
- Assistant Editor at the Kluwer Mediation Blog
- 2021 Lexology Getting the Deal Through (Mediation Edition) – New Zealand Chapter.
- Paul Sills 'Cognitive Bias in Mediation' Kluwer Mediation Blog 10 May 2020.
- Paul Sills, 'Cognitive Bias in Ethical Decision making' (2020) 9 JOFOI 1. <https://www.fsprivatewealth.com.au/article/cognitive-biases-in-ethical-decision-making-158322443>
- *Legalwise Seminars*, (New Zealand & Australia).
- New Zealand Law Society, 'LawTalk', (New Zealand Law Society, 2016 - present). Have published a monthly article on ADR in LawTalk since 2016.

Speaking Engagements / Lectures

- 2021 – to Present: UK and international engagements speaking on Fintech, Climate Change, Construction and Engineering, Energy Transition, arbitration, mediation and dispute boards.
- 2021 - Legalwise Mediation Masterclass – both New Zealand and Australia
- 2020 – CIArb Mediation Symposium (London) – Workshop on the Evolving Mediator and Cognitive Biases (Plus Plenary Session)
- 2020 – Paul Sills, 'Mediation Best Practice Masterclass' (Presentation for Legalwise Australasia Seminars, April 2020).
- 2019 - Paul Sills, 'Mediation Best Practice Masterclass' (Presentation for Legalwise Australasia Seminars, November 2019).
- 2019 – Paul Sills, 'Cognitive Bias in Ethical Decision Making' (Presentation for the Arbitrators & Mediators Association New Zealand, September 2019).
- 2019 – Paul Sills, 'The Influence of the Law regarding Mediation' (Presentation for the Arbitrators & Mediators Association New Zealand, July 2019).
- 2019 – Paul Sills, 'Cognitive Bias in Ethical Decision Making' (Presentation for Legalwise Australasia Seminars, June 2019).
- 2018 - Paul Sills, 'How to get the Best out of the Opportunity' (Presentation for Lowndes Corporate & Commercial Lawyers, July 2018).
- 2018 - Paul Sills, 'Negotiation, Mediation and Dispute Resolution' (Lecture to the University of Auckland Law School, May 2018).
- 2016 – Paul Sills, 'Alternative Dispute Resolution' (presentation for the Australian National Mediation Conference).

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- 2014 - Paul Sills, 'Diversity' (presentation for the Australian National Mediation Conference).

Awards & Recognitions

- 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025 – WWL Global Leader in Mediation.
- 2022 – Prime Disputes – Outstanding Global Achievement in Commercial Mediation.
- 2021, 2022, 2023 – Lexology Global Award – Client Care in Mediation.
- 2021 – NZ Lawyer Most Influential Lawyer Award (change maker category).
- 2020 - New Zealand Law Awards: Mediator of the Year.
- 2020 – Prime Dispute “Equality and Diversity Leader Award in Dispute Resolution”.
- 2019 – Arbitrators and Mediators Institute of New Zealand (AMINZ), Anne Edge Memorial Award for Excellence in Fellowship Examinations.
- 2019 – New Zealand Awards: Mediator of the Year Finalist.
- 2019 – LawFuel New Zealand’s 10 Leading Mediators.
- 1995 – New Zealand Law Society Bar Examinations, First place in Auckland.
- 1994 – New Zealand National Champion University Witness Examination

“Very sharp intellectually and gets a very good result for the client – is very good tactically”

Chambers & Partners, UK, 2021

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