

KWA GEOK CHOO DISTINGUISHED VISITORS LECTURE

CONSTRUCTIVE TRUSTS: FROM CONFUSION TO CLARITY**Professor Ying Khai Liew**

Melbourne Law School, University of Melbourne

Chairperson: Professor Hans Tjio
CJ Koh Professor and Director, EW Barker Centre for Law & Business, NUS Law

TUESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2026

5.30 PM - 7.00 PM

NUS LAW (KENT RIDGE CAMPUS), PERFORMANCE HALL

SYNOPSIS

Constructive trusts occupy a unique position in common law. Arising by operation of law, they represent one of equity's most powerful tools in resolving property disputes. At the same time, their incremental development in case law has led to significant doctrinal uncertainty. Courts struggle with fundamental questions, including: what precisely are constructive trusts; when should they arise; why do they arise; what role should judicial discretion play?

Drawing on developments in Singapore, England, and Australia, this lecture addresses the confusion that has arisen in this area of law, including: the roles and rationales of constructive trusts, their relationship with rights and remedies, the relevance of judicial discretion, and the complex choice of law issues they create in cross-border disputes. Rather than accepting constructive trusts as inherently messy, we will explore how certain analytical frameworks can bring much needed clarity to this field. By approaching the law systematically, we can better understand not just when constructive trusts arise, but why they serve essential functions within modern legal systems — which is critical for the law to develop in a coherent manner.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Ying Khai Liew is a Professor at the Melbourne Law School (MLS), University of Melbourne. He teaches and researches in private law, with a particular focus on the law of equity and trusts, the law of assignment, contracts, and remedies. He is the author of *Rationalising Constructive Trusts* (Hart Publishing 2017) and *Guest and Liew on the Law of Assignment* (currently in its fifth edition, Sweet & Maxwell 2024). He is also the founder and General Editor of the *Asia-Pacific Trusts Law*, *Asia-Pacific Contracts Law*, and *Asia-Pacific Property Law* book series (Hart Publishing). Ying is Associate Director (Private Law) of the Asian Law Centre, Co-Director of the Obligations Group, and Associate Dean (International) at

MLS. He is a General Editor of the *Journal of Equity*, an Academic Member of the Chancery Bar Association (UK), and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Law.

PROGRAMME

5.00PM: Registration
5.30PM: Lecture by Professor Ying Khai Liew
6.30PM: Q&A Session
7.00PM: Dinner Reception

REGISTRATION

There is no registration fee for this lecture. Visit bit.ly/486MCU4 or scan the QR Code to register.



Closing Date: 13 January 2026, 5.00 PM
Contact: law.events@nus.edu.sg

CPD POINTS

Public CPD Point: 1
Practice Area: Private Client
Training Level: Foundation

Participants who wish to obtain CPD Points are reminded that they must comply strictly with the Attendance Policy set out in the CPD Guidelines. For this activity, this includes signing in on arrival and signing out at the conclusion of the activity in the manner required by the organiser, and not being absent from the entire activity for more than 15 minutes. Participants who do not comply with the Attendance Policy will not be able to obtain CPD Points for attending the activity. Please refer to <http://www.sileCPDcentre.sg> for more information.