



## **VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED**

### **POSITION DESCRIPTION**

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| <b>POSITION:</b>             | <b>Civil Lawyer</b>  |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE TO:</b>       | <b>Principal Legal Officer - Civil</b>                             |
| <b>SALARY:</b>               | <b>LO Level 3.2 – 3.4 (\$62,470 - \$68,310)</b>                    |
| <b>LOCATION:</b>             | <b>Head Office - Preston</b>                                       |
| <b>STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT:</b> | <b>Full time - 12month contract<br/>(Possibility of extension)</b> |

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### **THE ORGANISATION**

We were established as a community controlled organisation in 1973 to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the criminal justice system. The organisation has a long and proud history of providing direct legal and service support for Aboriginal Victorians who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing negative contact with the justice system and advocating locally, nationally and internationally for the rights of Aboriginal people.

We strive to:

- Promote social justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- Promote the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to empowerment, identity and culture;
- Ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples enjoy their rights, are aware of their responsibilities under the law and have access to appropriate advice, assistance and representation;

- Reduce the disproportionate involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the criminal justice system; and
- Promote the review of legislation and other practices which discriminate against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The organisation has grown over the years (with further expansion options being pursued) and now offers criminal, family and civil law services, client services support, community legal education and a range of community justice support programs in both Victoria and Tasmania. The Tasmanian operation was established in 2015, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community Legal Service (TACLS), a semi-autonomous operation for Tasmania. We also established another semi-autonomous service in 2017, Balit Ngulu, a dedicated children and youth legal service for Aboriginal people in Victoria.

## **LEGAL AND CLIENT SERVICES**

This section is responsible for delivering client focussed quality services for Aboriginal Victorians and Tasmanians in contact with the justice system. Legal and Client Services are co-located in this section to drive an integrated, flexible and innovative approach to meeting client needs. The section liaises and networks with other Aboriginal organisations and works with stakeholders to reduce negative contact of Aboriginal people with the justice system. The section, in conjunction with Executive and Corporate Services also advocates for justice outcomes and prepares specialist advice on legislative, policy and program change.

The section oversees the provision of legal advice and legal aid, incorporating case management and planning with Solicitors and CSOs and specialist support staff particularly for more serious cases and clients experiencing complex issues. Solicitors, Paralegals and Legal Secretaries are located in this section to provide a clear line of accountability, and authority for management of the full range of legal functions.

Client and Community Programs include CSOs, Local Justice Workers, Community Justice Panels, Post Release Support and Community Legal Education. Their co-location with legal services provides the opportunity to integrate and adapt these services to meet the needs of clients as they enter and move through the justice system, and to work more broadly with communities to reduce negative contact with the justice system.

## **POSITION OVERVIEW:**

As a civil lawyer, you will be required to provide high quality legal services, including, advice and information, casework, representation and referral in civil law matters to members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Victoria. While the civil lawyer will undertake casework in core areas of legal need for Aboriginal communities, the role will have a particular focus on assisting clients affected by family violence who are seeking assistance with fines, tenancy and VOCAT matters.

This is a full-time position based at the VALS office in Preston, Victoria. However, occasionally you may be required to travel in order to deliver services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

## **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 1.1** Assist clients with advice, referrals and ongoing casework in core matters of legal need for Aboriginal communities in Victoria, including fines and infringements, VOCAT, tenancy, complaints against police and correctional services, discrimination and coronial (deaths in custody) enquiries.
- 1.2** Coordination of the VALS Infringements Clinic, including responsibility for casework and supervision of volunteers.
- 1.3** Appear personally as an advocate, and/or brief counsel to appear, in various Courts and Tribunals in civil law matters.
- 1.4** Assist with the supervision of volunteers working within the civil legal team.
- 1.5** Participate in community legal education projects, law reform and other VALS projects as required.
- 1.6** Maintain positive and collaborative relationships with key stakeholders, including Victoria Legal Aid, pro bono law firms, the Victorian Bar and other community organisations from both the legal and non-legal sectors.
- 1.7** Keep up to date with relevant civil legal developments and procedures by attending professional legal education programs and maintain an understanding of broader issues impacting the justice system and members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

## **KEY SELECTION CRITERIA**

### **1 QUALIFICATIONS**

- 2.1** Admitted to practice as a legal practitioner in Victoria, with at least 18 months post-admission experience.
- 2.2** A current Victorian driver's license.
- 2.3** The incumbent will be required to obtain a Working with Children check.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE**

### **3 Required**

- 3.1** A commitment to and understanding of the civil legal issues faced by members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in Victoria.
- 3.2** Experience working with people affected by family violence.
- 3.3** Experience assisting clients with fines and infringements matters will be highly regarded.
- 3.4** Capacity to work as an advocate and caseworker in civil law matters in the core practice areas outlined above at point 1.1.
- 3.5** Knowledge of and practical experience in the law and court procedures with a focus on the civil law jurisdiction, particularly in relation to the areas of law detailed above at point 1.1.
- 3.6** The ability to work collaboratively with others and to foster a co-operative and supportive team environment.
- 3.7** Sound interpersonal skills and the capacity to communicate effectively with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- 3.8** A knowledge of the principles and values of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.
- 3.9** Competency in the use of MS Office Software (particularly MS Outlook, MS Word, Excel, E-mail) to a legal practice and the capacity to quickly acquire competency in the use of VALS' client data base.

### **4 Preferred**

- 4.1** Experience working with members of the Aboriginal community, and/or Aboriginal clients.

- 4.2 Experience in providing community legal education and/or law reform, especially with respect to Aboriginal communities.
- 4.3 Knowledge and/or experience in other common areas of need as outlined above at point 1.1
- 4.4 Previous experience in the legal assistance sector.

**OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION**

This position will involve occasional work and travel outside of normal work hours.

The employee, prior to commencement, will need to disclose any pre-existing condition or injury that he/she knows about which could be reasonably foreseen to be affected by the described work duties.

Pursuant to s 82(7) of the *Accident Compensation Act 1985 (Vic)*, the failure to disclose information will mean that, if employed, the employee will not be paid compensation for such condition.

| Reviewing and approving this Position Description |                    |  |
|---|--------------------|--|
| Frequency   | Person responsible | Approval   |
| Annually  | HR Officer         | CEO<br>Director Legal and Client Services<br>Principal Legal Officer - Civil |

| Position Description review and version tracking |               |             |                 |
|--|---------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Review   | Date Approved | Approved by | Next Review Due |
| 1  | 5 March 2018  |             | 5 March 2019    |
| 2  |               |             |                 |
| 3  |               |             |                 |
| 4  |               |             |                 |
| 5  |               |             |                 |
| 6  |               |             |                 |
| 7  |               |             |                 |