



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

### **POSITION DESCRIPTION**

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<b>POSITION:</b>	<b>Senior Family Lawyer</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE TO:</b>	<b>Principal Legal Officer - Family</b>
<b>SALARY:</b>	<b>LO Level 4.1 - \$77,070</b>
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>Head Office - Preston</b>
<b>STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT:</b>	<b>Full time - 12month contract (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:**

The Senior Family Lawyer is to have 3-4 years of practical experience in family law. This position is to provide high quality legal services, including information, advice, representation, casework, negotiation and dispute resolution, and outreach services primarily in Family Law matters with a focus on family violence and related hearings in the Magistrates' Court of Victoria and the Federal Circuit and Family Courts of

Australia on behalf of members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) community in Victoria. This position also requires a willingness to conduct child protection matters.

To engage with and participate in VALS projects, policy and law reform initiatives, and community and professional legal education programs.

It is important that employee is endorsement or is eligible to become a Panel Certifier on Victorian Legal Aid's Family Law Panel.

**1. KEY SELECTION CRITERIA:**

- 1.1. Admitted or eligible for admission as a legal practitioner in Victoria and in the High Court of Australia,
- 1.2. Demonstrated ability to act as an advocate, deliver information, advice, casework and outreach services, and undertake negotiation and dispute resolution on behalf of VALS clients in Family Violence, Intervention Order and, to a lesser extent, Family Law matters,
- 1.3. Knowledge of and 3-4 years of practical experience in relevant law and procedure, with a focus on Family Violence Intervention Orders, Family Law and a willingness to conduct child protection matters,
- 1.4. Sound interpersonal skills and the capacity to communicate effectively with members of the ATSI community, VALS staff and other community organisations with which VALS interacts,
- 1.5. A commitment to and understanding of the legal issues faced by members of the ATSI community,
- 1.6. Demonstrated ability for quick and accurate decision-making and the ability to work under pressure and meet deadlines,
- 1.7. Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with others to foster a co-operative and supportive team environment,
- 1.8. A knowledge of and commitment to the principles and values of the VALS, and
- 1.9. Competency in the use of MS Office software (Word, Excel, E-mail) and the capacity to quickly acquire competency in the use of the VALS' client database.

## **2. KEY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 2.1. Appear as an advocate on behalf of VALS clients in Family Law proceedings in the Magistrates' Court of Victoria and the Federal Circuit and Family Courts of Australia, and at other statewide locations as required.
- 2.2. Deliver high quality legal services, including information, advice and casework on behalf of VALS clients in Family Law matters and other related matters as required.
- 2.3. Maintain a substantial caseload in Family Law matters.
- 2.4. Prepare and comply with applications for grants of legal assistance and reporting requirements for matters eligible for Victoria Legal Aid funding.
- 2.5. Attend, participate and contribute to the planning, service delivery and continuous improvement of the Family Law Practice and VALS.
- 2.6. Contribute to VALS projects, policy and law reform initiatives, and community and professional legal education programs as required.
- 2.7. Contribute to the collaborative relationship with Victoria Legal Aid and other community organisations with which VALS interacts.
- 2.8. Keep up to date with relevant legal developments and procedures by attending professional legal education programs and maintain an understanding of issues, risks and trends impacting upon the provision of relevant legal services and members of the ATSI community in Victoria.

### **OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:**

The employee will be required to hold or be eligible to obtain a Working with Children Check and have a current Victorian driver's licence.

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 s82(7) of the Accident Compensation Act 1985, 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 Director Legal and Client Services Principal Legal Officer - Family

Position Description review and version tracking			
Review	Date Approved	Approved by	Next Review Due
1	8 March 2018	Director Legal and Client Service	8 March 2019
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