



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

### **POSITION DESCRIPTION**

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<b>POSITION:</b>	<b>Senior Criminal Solicitor</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE TO:</b>	<b>Director Legal and Client Services</b>
<b>SALARY:</b>	<b>LO Level 4.1 – 4.3 (\$77,070 - \$83,490)</b>
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>Head Office (Preston)</b>
<b>STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT:</b>	<b>Full time (contract)</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 focused 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.

VALS has recently undertaken an organisational review to, amongst other things, ensure that its structure is aligned with and able to drive and support the future directions of the organisation.

### **POSITION OVERVIEW:**

Criminal Lawyers are to provide high quality legal services, including duty lawyer services, representation, advice and information in criminal law matters to members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Victoria.

## **1. KEY SELECTION CRITERIA:**

- 1.1 Admitted or eligible for admission as a legal practitioner in Victoria.
- 1.2 Capability to work as an advocate and caseworker in complex criminal law matters.
- 1.3 Substantial knowledge of and practical experience in the law and court procedures with a focus on the criminal law jurisdiction.
- 1.4 Ability to supervise, mentor and train staff and contribute to the development of individuals and their knowledge and skills in criminal law.
- 1.5 Sound interpersonal skills and the capacity to communicate effectively with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- 1.6 A commitment to and understanding of the legal issues faced by members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community in Victoria.
- 1.7 The ability to work collaboratively with others and to foster a co-operative and supportive team environment.
- 1.8 A knowledge of the principles and values of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.
- 1.9 Basic competency in the use of MS Office Software (particularly MS Word, Excel, E-mail) to a legal practice and the capacity to quickly acquire competency in the use of VALS' client data base.

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

- 2.1. Appear as a senior advocate in various courts including the Children's Court Criminal Division, Magistrates' Court, County Court and Koori Courts in order to represent clients of VALS.
- 2.2. Deliver a quality legal service by conducting casework in criminal law matters, including serious indictable matters, for members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- 2.3. Participate in the on call after hours roster and provide emergency advice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria. As a priority, ensure all VALS clients are represented whilst in custody.
- 2.4. Supervise and mentor staff working in the area of criminal law and contribute to the organisation in professional legal education and training.
- 2.5. Participate in community legal education projects, law reform and other VALS projects as required.
- 2.6. Participate in case-planning meetings with the criminal law section weekly.
- 2.7. Contribute to the collaborative relationship between Victoria Legal Aid and other community organisations with whom 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 impacting the justice system and members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- 2.9. You will be required to travel across Victoria to deliver services to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Sometimes this travel will occur outside of usual business hours.

**3. OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:**

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.

All staff are required to obtain a working with children check.

<b>Reviewing and approving this Position Description</b>		
<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Approval</b>
Annual	Human Resources Officer	CEO Director Legal and Client Services Principal Legal Officer - Criminal

<b>Position Description review and version tracking</b>			
<b>Review</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Next Review Due</b>
1	February 2018	PLO – Criminal Director Legal and Client Service	February 2019
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