



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

### **POSITION DESCRIPTION**

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<b>POSITION:</b>	<b>Criminal Lawyer</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE TO:</b>	<b>Principal Legal Officer - Criminal</b>
<b>SALARY:</b>	<b>Level 2.1 – 3.4 (\$55,150 - \$68,310) negotiable depending on experience</b>
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>Head Office</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
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- 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 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:**

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 Experience of, or understanding of the role of a caseworker and advocate in criminal law matters.
- 1.3 Knowledge of the law and court procedures with a focus on the criminal law jurisdiction.
- 1.4 Sound interpersonal skills and the capacity to communicate effectively with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- 1.5 A commitment to and understanding of the legal issues faced by members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community in Victoria.
- 1.6 The ability to work collaboratively with others and to foster a co-operative and supportive team environment.
- 1.7 A knowledge of the principles and values of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.
- 1.8 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. Under the supervision of the Senior Criminal Lawyers and the Executive Officer Legal Practice, appear with leave as an 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 in criminal matters.
- 2.2. Under the supervision of the Senior Criminal Lawyers and the Executive Officer Legal Practice Deliver a quality legal service by conducting casework in criminal law matters for members of the ATSI community.
- 2.3. Participate in the on call after hours roster and Under the supervision of the Senior Criminal Lawyers and the Executive Officer Legal Practice provide emergency advice to members of the ATSI community in Victoria. Further, ensure all VALS clients are represented whilst in custody.
- 2.4. Participate in community legal education projects, law reform and other VALS projects as required.
- 2.5. Participate in case-planning meetings with the criminal law section weekly.
- 2.6. Contribute to the collaborative relationship between Victoria Legal Aid and other community organizations with whom VALS interacts.
- 2.7. 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 Community.
- 2.8. You will be required to travel across Victoria to deliver services to the ATSI community. Sometimes this travel will occur outside of usual business hours

**4. 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>
Annually	Human Resources Administration Officer	CEO Director, Legal and Client Services

<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	1 <sup>st</sup> August 2017		01 <sup>th</sup> January 2018
2	15 December 2017		15 December 2018
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