



## Position Description – Criminal Law Paralegal

Position:	Criminal Law Paralegal
Reports to:	Principal Legal Officer – Criminal Law
Salary:	LO Level 1.1 (SCHADS Level 4) \$61,971.00 per annum, plus superannuation and optional salary packaging
Location:	Head Office - 273 High Street, Preston, Victoria This position may require regional and interstate travel
Employment type:	Full-time (fixed term until June 2020)

### About us

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 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.



## Our Values

### Cultural Values

Our team commit to remember what we are here for, how our organisation came into being and ensure we are centred in the community. We are an organisation with a community focus for the benefit of the community.

### Respect

We advocate for and demonstrate the right of every person to be treated with dignity and respect.

### Compassion

We are aware of the issues and challenges facing Aboriginal communities and strive to ensure our organisation is part of resolving those issues and challenges.

### Commitment

We believe everyone who works at or with VALS is committed to achieving better justice outcomes for Aboriginal communities.

### Hope

We believe we will achieve change for Aboriginal communities. We expect our actions to have a positive impact on Government at all levels.

### Integrity

We are steadfast in our adherence to our values. We take every measure to protect our clients' privacy.

We keep our word and stand by our commitments.

## About the team

### Legal and Client Services

This section is responsible for delivering client focussed quality services for Aboriginal Victorians in contact with the justice system.

Legal and Client Services are co-located in this unit 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 Aboriginal people have with the justice system.

In conjunction with Executive and Corporate Services this section also advocates for improved justice outcomes and prepares specialist advice on legislation change.

The Director, with the PLOs ensures all legal standards and CLC Risk Management guidelines are met.

The PLO Tasmania Aboriginal Community Legal Service reports direct to the CEO but maintains a functional relationship with this section to ensure collegiate and professional support for delivery of high quality legal services.



## About the position

### Overview

To support the work of the VALS legal team by providing a point of first contact and triage for people seeking to access the legal team's legal services. To ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria who require legal assistance are given the best opportunity to access that assistance, whether through VALS or other external organisations.

### Key Performance Indicators, Duties & Responsibilities

1. Conduct initial intake for people seeking legal assistance, primarily over the phone but also from time to time in person at the VALS Preston office.
2. Taking thorough and concise intake notes for legal enquiries, as well as recording mandatory client data for reporting purposes.
3. Manage large daily volumes of client data and intake material within VALS' client database, to ensure follow up tasks related to intake and processing are being effectively managed.
4. Manage and collaborate with volunteers, by allocating tasks and work throughout the day that will best enable them to support the work of the paralegal.
5. Make timely, appropriate and effective referrals for individuals the VALS criminal team is unable to assist, including to external organisations as well as within VALS, for both legal and non-legal matters.
6. Actively participate in weekly case planning meetings, to assist the team to determine the extent of any further assistance the VALS is able to offer.
7. Manage simple casework files under the supervision of the senior solicitor;
8. Participate in community legal education projects, law reform and other VALS projects as required.
9. Contribute to the collaborative relationship between Victoria Legal Aid and other community organisations to support warm referrals to other legal professionals where VALS cannot assist the client.
10. As directed, undertake other duties which are incidental and peripheral to the main tasks, provided that such duties are reasonably within the employee's skills, competence and training.

### Key Selection Criteria

1. Sound interpersonal skills and a demonstrated ability to interact and communicate effectively with persons seeking legal assistance.
2. A commitment to and understanding of the legal issues faced by members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in Victoria.
3. The ability to quickly attend to tasks in an efficient and precise manner, with attention to detail, and a demonstrated capacity to balance multiple responsibilities in a high-pressure environment.
4. Basic knowledge of the law and court procedures with a focus on the areas of law the legal practice focusses on.
5. A demonstrated ability to communicate and liaise in a professional manner with VALS external stakeholder organisations and their representatives, including pro bono law firms, other CLCs, Court and Tribunal staff etc.
6. The ability to work collaboratively with others and to foster a co-operative and supportive team environment.



7. Strong skills in the use of MS Office Software (particularly MS Word, Excel, E-mail) relevant to a legal practice, and the capacity to quickly acquire competency in the use of VALS' client data base.

**Qualifications**

1. Enrolled in or completed a Bachelor of Laws or similar practical training qualification or be otherwise eligible for admission as a legal practitioner in Victoria.

**Key Capabilities**

1. Gains insight into the team's vision and goals.
2. Demonstrates respect for self and colleagues.
3. Approaches each task with enthusiasm.
4. Manages competing demands.
5. Practises good legal writing; complies with the style guide or the specific requirements of the clients; shows attention to detail when preparing documents.
6. Participates in knowledge sharing activities such as team meetings and training programs.

**Mandatory Requirements**

On offer of this position, you must provide:

- a copy of your current Employee Working with Children card
- a copy of your current Victorian Driver's License
- you will be required to complete a current Criminal History Police Check
- proof of rights to work in Australia, i.e. a copy of an Australian Passport, Birth Certificate or Immigration VISA documentation

**How to apply**

Please send your resume together with a covering letter which addresses the **Key Selection Criteria** (found within the position description) to [jobs@vals.org.au](mailto:jobs@vals.org.au)

**Acceptance on position offer**

I understand and am clear of the position expectations and requirements

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_