

POSITION TITLE:	Senior Lawyer, Civil Law		
REPORTS TO:	Manager – Mallee Regional Office		
PROGRAM AREA:	Regional	LOCATION:	Mildura
CLASSIFICATION:	VLA4	POSITION TYPE:	Ongoing

POSITION SUMMARY

To act as an advocate by providing high quality civil law services, including information, advice and casework, to disadvantaged clients who have complex legal and non-legal needs. The role is focused on working within the community to prevent or address legal problems at the earliest opportunity through targeted community legal education and engagement. As legal problems tend to cluster, the role holder may occasionally be required to provide advice and assistance in other legal areas connected to the primary legal problem, including legal information and facilitating referrals.

The role is responsible for leading the delivery of our civil justice practice within VLA's Health Justice Partnership with Sunraysia Community Health Services in Mildura. Along with supporting the needs of common clients, the role-holder will participate in professional development activities directed at supporting health workers and service providers to identify and respond to signs of legal need.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Deliver a civil justice practice in Mildura by delivering innovative services that will assist us to target unmet legal need and reach remote disadvantaged clients by leading community legal education projects, remote outreach, training for local service providers and other innovative services.
2. Provide legal advice primarily in civil law matters in areas that most affect people's rights (including mental health and disability law, tenancy, guardianship and administration, infringements and social security) in line with service guidelines. Holistically support the client's legal needs by providing legal assistance in other legal areas connected to the primary legal issue, where necessary.
3. Work collaboratively with Sunraysia Community Legal Services ('SCHS') and other health, legal and social service partners to reach vulnerable clients and support them to resolve their legal problems at the earliest opportunity.
4. Work alongside VLA's Aboriginal Community Engagement Officer, to establish effective relationships with Aboriginal communities to ensure services are accessible and delivered with cultural awareness and sensitivity.
5. Assist the Health Justice Partnership, advocate for systemic changes to law and policy to improve access to justice with a focus on our civil justice practice areas.
6. Conduct casework and appear as a lawyer advocate in complex matters across various courts and tribunals, including VCAT and the Mental Health Tribunal.
7. Contribute to recording and reviewing service data, as informed by the Performance and Evaluation framework for the Mildura service.
8. Maintain knowledge of issues affecting access to justice, legal assistance service delivery and substantive civil law,

RESPONSIBILITIES

9. Assist with the professional development of other lawyers (including local panel practitioners) in this area, where appropriate.

KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

1. Demonstrated self-motivation and ability to work in a team environment, while operating outside a conventional legal practice model to explore novel and innovative ways of delivering legal services to disadvantaged clients.
2. Demonstrated capacity and willingness to develop positive relationships and work collaboratively with stakeholders, including across disciplines.
3. Knowledge and practical experience in civil law, ability to provide advice and casework and advocate before courts and tribunals, particularly in the areas of mental health and disability law, tenancy, social security and infringements.
4. High level interpersonal and communication skills, including demonstrated ability to communicate effectively with diverse clients who are socially and economically disadvantaged, with complex legal and non-legal needs.
5. The ability to provide legal education to the community, including potential clients and legal and non-legal service providers, developing their awareness in targeted civil law areas.
6. Knowledge and understanding of the key challenges to clients accessing legal services, particularly in regional and rural areas.
7. A knowledge of the general business of VLA and a commitment of our vision and values.

QUALIFICATIONS/ EXPERIENCE

- A current Australian practising certificate which entitles you to practise in Victoria as a government practitioner (mandatory).
- Entitled to practise in federal courts and courts exercising federal jurisdiction (entry on the High Court's *Register of Practitioners*) (mandatory).
- Experience in other areas of practice, including Child Protection and Family Violence (highly desirable).

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

- To be eligible to apply for this position you must be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, permanent resident or hold a valid work permit or visa.
- You will be required to undergo or hold a current Working with Children Check.
- From time to time you will be required to travel between various office locations to deliver quality services to our clients or for professional development.
- This position will require you to independently travel to outreach services, courts and tribunals including Robinvale and surrounding locations within and surrounding the Mildura local government area.

ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

VLA provides legal aid services to members of the community both in-house and through contracted private lawyers. Our services include duty lawyers at courts, legal representation on individual cases, legal information and community legal education. Our in-house practice is divided into four programs: Criminal Law, Family, Youth & Children's Law, Civil Justice and Access and Equity. It is one of the largest legal practices in Victoria employing 270 plus lawyers in 17 locations across the state. As well as its legal work, VLA conducts research into and makes submissions concerning legal aid and law reform issues.

VLA has 15 offices. Six are situated in metropolitan Melbourne (CBD, Broadmeadows, Dandenong, Frankston, Ringwood and Sunshine) and nine in regional Victoria (Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Horsham, Morwell, Bairnsdale, Shepparton, Mildura and Warrnambool). The work mix of each office varies according to the needs and characteristics of the region in which it operates. All regional offices provide a comprehensive range of legal services (in most areas of law), duty lawyer services, casework in most Victorian courts and tribunal and community legal education.

Mildura Health Justice Partnership

Victoria Legal Aid has committed to improving access to justice in the Mallee region. We formed a Health Justice Partnership ("HJP") with Sunraysia Community Health Service and we are co-located within their existing building. We began providing services to clients under the HJP in July 2017. The design of VLA's Mildura service aims to maximise the early intervention benefits of a HJP, which reflects the reality that most people are more likely to present to health services before they identify or obtain advice for a legal problem. This service trials creative strategies to address legal need, which may then inform service delivery in other parts of Victoria.

The civil law practice within the Mildura service focuses on issues that most affect people's rights, including through interactions with government and public authorities, such as mental health law, disabilities, infringement fines, social security and tenancy issues. A key priority is reaching members of the community who are least likely to proactively seek help from lawyers, including through community legal education, outreach and building community partnerships.

VLA Mildura is a small and dynamic legal team, consisting of a Manager, a civil lawyer, a child protection lawyer, an Aboriginal Community Engagement Officer, a Service Coordinator and Triage Officer and a Legal Assistant. It is anticipated that the size of this team and the nature of the service being provided will result in each of the lawyers occasionally overlapping in all areas within the scope of the service, providing advice where work capacity or staff absence may require this.

OUR VISION & VALUES

Our vision

A fair and just society where rights and responsibilities are upheld.

Our purpose

To make a difference in the lives of our clients and for the community by:

- resolving and preventing legal problems.
- encouraging a fair and transparent justice system.

Our values

Fair

We stand up for what is fair.

We aim to be fair when making choices about who and how we help people.

Care

We care about our clients and the community in which we live.

OUR VISION & VALUES

We look out for and take care of each other.

Courage

We act with courage backed by evidence about what is best for clients and the community.

We act with courage to be the best we can be.

For further information on our services, objectives and values please visit www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

VLA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and is committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce. We encourage people from culturally diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to apply for positions within our organisation. We will make reasonable adjustment where possible for people with disabilities.

Position Description authorised by Resourcing & Remuneration Manager

Signed: 

Date: 27/6/18