POSITION DESCRIPTION

POSITION: Director, Legal and Client Services

RESPONSIBLE TO: Chief Executive Officer

SALARY: $90,000 - $110,000

LOCATION: Head Office

STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT: Full time (contract)

LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY:

The position operates under the broad direction and guidance of the Chief Executive Officer and Board of Directors

Please note: This is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander designated position, classified under Section 12 Special Measures of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010. This employment opportunity is only available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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.
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. As a result of the review two new positions have been created at the Director level; the Director Executive and Corporate Services and the Director Legal Sector and Client Services. Along with the Chief Financial Officer these positions report directly to the CEO and collectively form the VALS Executive Team.

POSITION OVERVIEW:

The Director Legal and Client Services is a member of the Executive Management Team and as part of the Executive Team works to achieve the VALS’ goals and objectives.

The Director, Legal and Client Services manages the delivery of quality legal and client services to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community and stakeholders. This position oversees the provision of client services, legal advice and legal aid, incorporates case management and planning with Solicitors, Client Services and Administrative Staff in Victoria. The position has indirect oversight and responsibility for TACLS and Balit Ngulu. In addition, this position is responsible for ensuring that legal practice standards are met and pro-actively delivering in house training.

1. KEY SELECTION CRITERIA:

1.1. A current, unrestricted Victorian Practising Certificate and eligible to receive a Principal of Law Practising Certificate.

1.2. Comprehensive understanding of the issues confronting Aboriginal people in relation to the delivery of legal services and associated issues.

1.3. Demonstrate cultural sensitivity and a commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, access to justice principles and human rights standards.

1.4. Extensive professional experience in the practice of law.

1.5. Demonstrated experience in managing and supervising solicitors, support and other relevant staff.

1.6. Demonstrated experience in the development, informing and delivery of training to solicitors, staff, community and stakeholders.

1.7. Capacity to liaise with Government and non-government organisations on legal and associated issues relevant to the Organisation.
1.8. Capacity to represent the organisation at a range of forums relevant to organisation at local, regional, state, national and international levels.

1.9. Demonstrated achievements in strategic planning.

1.10. Demonstrated ability to undertake program management in a service delivery environment and the capacity to innovatively develop client centred legal and service solutions that reduce negative justice outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

1.11. Demonstrated capacity to work in an environment of continuous improvement, innovation and change.

1.12. Excellent written, verbal and interpersonal skills.

1.13. Demonstrated ability to work as part of a team in a multi-skilled and multi-discipline working environment.

1.14. Excellent computer and word-processing skills.

1.15. Hold at minimum an undergraduate law degree and have completed management training and/or qualifications, with a minimum of three years of relevant experience.

1.16. A current Victorian driver’s licence.

2. **KEY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

2.1. Establish and lead the newly created Legal and Client Services Section.

2.2. Directly and through appropriate delegation:
   2.2.1. Supervise and manage the solicitors, paralegals, legal secretaries and community justice programs of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, TACLS and Balit Ngulu
   2.2.2. Co-ordinate the work of all subordinate staff directly and/or indirectly through appropriate delegation, including: legal casework of solicitors

2.3. Take an active, corporate and constructive role as a member of the Executive Management Team.

2.4. Directly and through appropriate delegation oversee the preparation of legal representation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders clients in criminal, civil and family law matters.
2.5. Directly and through delegation oversee and develop innovative community justice programs to achieve integrated and relevant client support.

2.6. Directly and through appropriate delegation monitor and evaluate the performance of solicitors, paralegals, secretaries and community justice staff employed by the organisation. This will include completion of performance agreements, provision of feedback and preparation of reports on all staff, as well as performance management where required.

2.7. Ensure adherence to all relevant organisational policies with particular focus on service delivery and stakeholder engagement.

2.8. Provide counsel and guidance to the solicitors, as appropriate, on matters of law and case management.

2.9. Ensure that the organisation and its solicitors, paralegals, legal secretaries and community justice staff meet their professional and ethical obligations, adhering to all legislative and contract requirements and ensure that solicitors maintain the highest ethical standards.

2.10. Provide input on the development of the legal and client services budget. Implement and monitor a yearly budget, including brief-outs.

2.11. Co-ordinate, supervise and, where appropriate, undertake the training of new staff.

2.12. Train all staff in the delivery of advocacy from basic to more complex matters.

2.13. Ensure all solicitors complete appropriate continuing legal education.

2.14. Provide on-going training and up-dating of legal knowledge for all VALS’ staff.

2.15. Liaise with community legal groups and other stakeholders in the legal system to promote the commitments and work of the organisation.

2.16. Prepare papers, submissions and policy statements on behalf of the organisation as the need arises.

2.17. Develop and maintain effective working relationships with key interest groups, major stakeholders and partners of the organisation to advance our work and strategic directions.

2.18. Initiate high level stakeholder engagement that facilitates greater involvement of external stakeholders and partners in supporting the organisation; and
2.19. Prepare high level briefings, reports and presentations to the Board, and Chief Executive Officer as required.

2.20. Provide timely and accurate operational reporting on the function of the legal and client services practice to the Chief Executive Officer and Board of Directors.

2.21. Other duties as directed.

**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 executive level staff are subject to a criminal record check.

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