# Position description

**Position title:** Senior Policy and Projects Officer

**Reports to:** Manager, Strategic Advocacy and Policy

**Program area:** Criminal Law

**Location:** Melbourne

**Classification:** VLA4

**Position type:** Ongoing

## Victoria Legal Aid’s Reconciliation Action Plan

Victoria Legal Aid is an Equal Opportunity Employer committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce and we strongly encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to apply for positions within our organisation. It is a key priority of our[Reconciliation Action Plan](https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/sites/www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/files/vla-reconciliation_action-plan-july-2019-21.pdf) to support principles of self-determination by increasing Aboriginal employment across all areas of VLA. We recognise that our workforce can benefit greatly from the unique knowledge, skills and expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in achieving a culturally safe and responsive service for our clients.

## Position Summary

To support the Criminal Law leadership team by providing strategic legal and policy advice and project implementation leadership.

## Responsibilities

1. Support the Executive Director, Criminal Law leadership team and the CEO with strategic advice, and work with the Manager, Strategic Advocacy and Policy, the senior leadership team and relevant staff in the Criminal Law Directorate to deliver law reform, advocacy and project implementation priorities.
2. Contribute to and lead the development, planning and preparation of law reform, policy and advocacy strategies. This may include; collaborative planning with the criminal programs and other VLA directorates; engaging outside VLA; collation of consumer stories and consent; research and analysis of current issues impacting the criminal justice system; data coordination; identifying emerging issues and risks in the criminal justice system; writing letters, briefings and submissions.
3. Assist with the collection and use of client stories to support advocacy and law reform activities across the Criminal Law teams and regional offices.
4. Raise awareness of Criminal Law advocacy and law reform priorities and opportunities, and contribute to stronger collaborative relationships between the policy team and practising staff.
5. Act as a VLA Criminal Law representative on nominated internal and external stakeholder and project committees and ensure direct relationships between VLA corporate support and practice staff.

## Key selection criteria

1. Demonstrated ability to lead policy development on law reform and strategic advocacy activities.
2. Demonstrated experience in the law and court procedures relevant to the practice of criminal law.
3. Excellent research, written analysis skills, with an ability to think laterally and innovatively at both an operational and strategic level.
4. Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, and a demonstrated ability to influence and negotiate with people across all levels of the organisation and with external stakeholders.
5. Excellent organisational skills, attention to detail, the ability to work autonomously within a small team environment and to meet deadlines under pressure.
6. Demonstrated understanding of the issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the demonstrated ability to effectively communicate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
7. A knowledge of the general business of VLA and a commitment to our vision and values.

## Qualifications/experience

* Experience in the practice of Criminal Law (mandatory).
* Breadth of experience in more than one program area of law (desirable).
* Experience in strategic advocacy, working with data and project management (desirable).
* Tertiary qualification in law (mandatory).
* Demonstrated experience and understanding of cultural norms in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients (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 may be required to consent to a police check. Please note that people with criminal records are not automatically prevented from applying for this position and each application will be considered on its merits.
* It is a requirement that all VLA employees reside in Victoria, or a nearby border community, and can attend for office-based days at their primary work location. 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.
* Occupational health and safety responsibilities at Victoria Legal Aid:
  + All staff at VLA are expected to champion proactive and positive health and safety practices in the workplace by raising health, safety and wellbeing issues or concerns with managers and colleagues. Staff are required to observe all safe work procedures, rules and instructions, and take all reasonable care for their own safety and for the safety of work colleagues by always operating in a safe and appropriate manner.

## Organisational context

VLA provides legal aid services to the Victorian community through our in-house practice, contracted private lawyers as well as by funding community legal centres. We have 15 offices across the state of Victoria.

We serve the broader community by providing information, legal advice, and education with a focus on the prevention and early resolution of legal problems. We prioritise more intensive services, such as legal advice, legal representation, non-legal advocacy, and family dispute resolution, to those who need it the most.

We recognise the intersections between legal and social issues in the way we do our work and advocate for change. We also work to address the barriers that prevent people from accessing the justice system by participating in systemic inquiries and reforms and strategic advocacy.

Our in-house practice covers four program areas, Criminal Law, Family, Youth and Children’s Law, Civil Justice and Access and Equity.

The Criminal Law Program is responsible for the delivery of services across four sub-programs:

* Summary Crime Team
* Indictable Crime Team
* Youth Crime Team
* Higher Court Appeals

The Criminal Law Program objectives are:

* To provide access to quality advice and representation for people charged with offences who cannot otherwise afford it, with a focus on those who are disadvantaged or at risk of social exclusion.
* To influence the criminal justice system to provide timely justice, the fair hearing of charges and appropriate outcomes.
* To ensure that people charged with offences are treated with dignity, well informed and guided appropriately through the criminal justice system.
* To improve community understanding of criminal justice and behavioural issues.

Criminal Law Services are delivered across metropolitan and regional locations.

## Our vision and values

### Our vision

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

### Our purpose

To make a difference for clients and the community through the provision of effective legal services and collaborative leadership of a strong and dynamic legal assistance sector.

### Our values

#### Fairness

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.

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.

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 adjustments where possible for people with disabilities.

Position Description authorised by Strategic Resourcing Manager.

Date approved: 1 December 2021