

Position Description

Position:	Principal Solicitor
Reports To:	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Award Pay Level:	Level 7 under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Award 2010
Location:	Footscray VIC, (Flexible work arrangements on agreement , travel to other ASRC sites required, as necessary)
Date Update:	October 2024

Organisational context

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) is a leading advocacy organisation for people seeking asylum in Australia. We are a values-driven organisation that strives to be part of a movement that helps people seeking asylum by providing direct services such as assistance with accommodation, food, casework, employment, education and legal services. We campaign and lobby with our sector to drive law reform and policy change.

At the heart of the ASRC strategy is the people we serve, and our commitment to ensuring that their voices of lived experience are embedded in all that we do. The ASRC exists for refugees and asylum seekers, and we are in the service of this community of people. It's important that our work and focus is led by what this community needs, expects and wants from us.

About the Team

The Human Rights Law Program (HRLP) is an accredited Community Legal Centre auspiced by the ASRC, committed to technical excellence, centering client dignity, and trauma-informed practice. It offers a unique and specialist service prioritising legal assistance for refugees and people seeking asylum who face the greatest barriers to accessing their human rights, including people fleeing persecution on the basis of their gender and sexuality and people in detention. The HRLP offers a range of services including referral, one-off advice, clinic assistance and full representation across all stages of the refugee status determination process, including merits and judicial review.

The HRLP works alongside the Humanitarian Operations and Resilience Department, which delivers the services that stabilise the circumstances of at-risk people seeking asylum, so they can continue to engage constructively with their visa determination process and ensure their best possible chance of a pathway to successful settlement. The Department prioritises those who face the greatest barriers to accessing their human rights during this process.

The HRLP also works closely with the Systemic Change team who are responsible for law and policy reform.

Position Purpose

The Principal Solicitor is responsible for managing the HRLP including staff and volunteer management, access to justice programs, law reform and strategic litigation activities, stakeholder engagement, oversight of budget, allocation and administration of resources, reporting, and strategic planning.

In conjunction with the Deputy CEO, this role has the overall responsibility for the strategic direction of the legal practice and legal services (including all case work, telephone advice, community legal education and information program, and law and policy reform program). The Principal Solicitor is responsible for ensuring compliance with professional and ethical standards, and managing risk within the practice.

The Principal Solicitor plays a key role in the organisation reporting directly to the Deputy CEO and will sit on the Board Risk subcommittee. The ASRC's strategic plan FY25-27 includes areas of key focus for the HRLP and Principal Solicitor to continue our important work.

Key Accountabilities

- Lead and develop a high performing team of lawyers and other professional staff and volunteers to deliver the HRLP program in line with ASRC strategic plan.
- Professional supervision of the Senior Solicitors, Legal Practice Manager and act as a point of escalation for the Legal Practice including managing staff and in completing legal case work.
- Plan, monitor and evaluate HRLP operations to ensure appropriate resource allocation, effective service delivery and the best possible outcomes for clients.
- Develop and manage the annual HRLP budget.
- Oversee and develop the knowledge management program, both internally and externally to the team, including development of training and resources for clients, staff and strategic partners.

- Develop and implement the service delivery strategy, including strategic litigation and day to day case loads.
- As the Responsible Person, ensure HRLP complies with all legal and professional obligations set out in the NACLC Risk Management Guide and relevant laws, including overseeing NACLC accreditation, insurance, delegations and audit requirements.
- Manage the review of policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure alignment to CLC requirements to maintain accreditation and compliance.
- Work collaboratively with ASRC programs to ensure holistic support and develop strategies to ensure the client experience is as seamless, efficient and effective as possible.
- Together with the Legal Practice Manager and the Program Quality & Impact team, manage the reporting on HRLP outcomes and progress.
- Legal representation of HRLP clients in select complex and/or sensitive matters, and other legal service delivery as appropriate.
- Together with the Legal Practice Manager, oversee all aspects of legal staff and volunteer recruitment, development & management to meet our strategic objectives.
- Management and development of relationships and partnerships with all key HRLP stakeholders including representing the ASRC as a high-level liaison with the Department of Home Affairs, corporate partners, tribunals and courts, and facilitating sector collaboration.
- Attend meetings, consultations and roundtables as required, including with professional, peak and decision-making bodies and refugee & legal sector partners to advance the strategic aims of the ASRC.
- Work closely with Systemic Change to contribute to law reform, written policy submissions, media and inquiries as required.

ASRC leaders will:

- Actively role model and lead improvements to occupational health and safety standards to ensure the ASRC workforce are safe and supported at work.
- Centre the rights of people seeking asylum and actively working toward bringing the ASRC vision and purpose to life.
- Drive and embed the ASRC values through behaviours that contribute to a culturally safe, inclusive and respectful workplace.
- Contribute to broader advocacy, campaigns and fundraising initiatives to help advance our strategic advocacy priorities.

Role Requirements

Essential Skills, Experience & Qualifications

- Strong experience in leading and managing a diverse team of staff and volunteers.
- Significant post-admission experience, with sound technical experience in refugee law and practice.
- A current legal practising certificate and migration agent registration.
- Experience managing a program or service, including program design, troubleshooting challenges, managing budgets, evaluating impact, reporting, delegation, and continuous improvement.
- Demonstrated excellence in legal representation, including in advocacy before administrative decision makers and/or courts.
- Exceptional communication, leadership and interpersonal skills with the ability to build key internal and external stakeholder relationships.
- Demonstrated ability to manage strategic change and operational demands as in a complex and diverse workforce.
- Cultural competency with the ability to work effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.
- Experience in working in a Community Legal Centre environment with knowledge of the NACLC risk management guidelines and audit procedures.
- Knowledge of the policy context of practice with asylum seekers visa categories/conditions, and the barriers faced by people seeking asylum in Australia.

Desirable:

- Lived experience of seeking asylum

Policy and screening requirements

All ASRC staff and volunteers are required to adhere to policies and procedures which aim to further culturally safe, inclusive and respectful work practices. All offers of employment are subject to satisfactory Criminal History Check and provision of a valid Working with Children Check prior to commencement.

I have read and understood and agree to perform the responsibilities outlined in this position description.	
Name:	Date: