

Position description

Position title:	Associate Public Defender, Civil Justice
Reports to:	Public Defender, Civil Justice
Program area:	VLA Chambers
Location:	Naarm / Melbourne CBD, on Wurundjeri Country
Classification:	WVR 4.2 – 42LO4B

Position Summary

To provide high quality advocacy for legally aided clients in Civil Justice matters of legal importance or complexity at various state and federal courts and tribunals across Victoria.

To provide legal advice and opinions, practical support and assistance, professional legal education, mentoring and training to in-house and external practitioners representing legally aided clients.

Responsibilities

1. Appear as Counsel on behalf of VLA clients in complex matters across VLA's Civil Justice practice in all relevant jurisdictions.
2. Provide legal advice and opinions (oral and written) on complex and strategic issues across VLA's Civil Justice program.
3. Work with VLA Civil Justice lawyers to identify and develop opportunities for strategic litigation.
4. Deliver professional legal education, mentoring and training to practitioners on Civil Justice law, procedure and advocacy skills.
5. Maintain accurate knowledge of changes to relevant legislation and case law, participate in committee work as directed and assist in the drafting of expert and authoritative law reform submissions on behalf of VLA.

Essential standards and capabilities

The following standards and capabilities are **mandatory** and required to perform the duties and responsibilities of this position.

- A current unrestricted Australian practising certificate which entitles you to practise in Victoria as a government legal practitioner.
- Entitled to practise in federal courts and courts exercising federal jurisdiction (entry on the High Court's Register of Practitioners).
- A right to work in Australia (i.e., be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, permanent resident, or hold a valid visa).

- 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.
- Ability to independently travel to various office locations, meeting venues, outreach services, courts and tribunals to deliver quality services to our clients, for meetings and/or professional development, as required.
- A valid Victorian Working with Children Check.

Please note that all appointments are subject to reference checks and pre-employment misconduct screening.

Key selection criteria

1. Demonstrated experience, skills and ability in advocacy and civil law litigation.
2. Thorough knowledge and experience in the practice of civil law under State or Federal legislation.¹
3. Ability to provide high quality advice (oral and written) on Civil Justice legal and policy issues within limited time constraints.
4. High level interpersonal, communication and negotiation skills and demonstrated ability to liaise and communicate effectively with staff, external stakeholders and clients with complex needs.
5. Ability and aptitude for mentoring, training and assisting in the development of legal staff.
6. Ability to work collaboratively with others and foster a cooperative and supportive environment within Chambers and the Civil Justice program.
7. Demonstrated experience working with Victorian First Peoples communities, including an understanding of First Peoples cultures, cultural protocols and self-determination, and the demonstrated ability to lead culturally safe practice, build respectful partnerships and improve outcomes for First Peoples (highly desirable).
8. A knowledge of the general business of VLA and a commitment to our vision and values.

Occupational health and safety responsibilities at VLA

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

Victoria Legal Aid is a cornerstone of Victoria's justice system, delivering essential legal services to the community.

We provide legal advice, dispute resolution, representation, information and advocacy services to hundreds of thousands of Victorians each year for criminal, civil, family violence, child protection and

¹ When we use the term 'civil law' we mean administrative law, human rights law, and public law generally or the specific subject matter areas Civil Justice works in at VLA. See 'About the role' in the advertisement for more information about Civil Justice at VLA.

family law problems. We ensure people have access to legal services close to where they live, across metropolitan, suburban and regional locations.

Through non-legal, early intervention and dispute resolution services, we support people to understand their rights, participate in decision-making and resolve matters. We work closely with partners to influence policies and challenge unfair laws and practices to make our society fairer for everyone.

By coordinating legal assistance and information, resolving issues early and supporting people through court processes when necessary, we help prevent problems escalating and reduce harm. We target our efforts and limited resources to help those with the greatest need.

Chambers

Chambers works closely with VLA's inhouse legal teams to support their staff and strategic priorities, improve collaboration between solicitors and advocates, and promote briefing practices in accordance with VLA's diversity and quality commitments.

Chambers works to meet the needs of our clients and strengthen the broader justice system through:

- **Advocacy:** as part of the mixed model of service delivery, we complement the advocacy services provided by the Victorian Bar. Our advocates represent and appear for legally aided clients in a wide range of matters and complexity anywhere in Victoria and undertake strategic litigation intended to benefit the broader community;
- **Advice:** we provide an experienced advisory voice based on our practice experience on important stakeholder consultations, law reform and policy development; and
- **Legal education and mentoring:** we enhance the quality of legal services undertaken by VLA and the wider profession through the provision of:
 - **Legal education and advice** on law, procedure and case strategy to lawyers representing legally aided clients anywhere in Victoria (whether inhouse, panel firms or CLCs); and
 - **Advocacy skills development**, mentoring and career pathways for solicitor advocates and barristers representing legally aided clients anywhere in Victoria (whether inhouse or at the private Bar).

Chambers is led by the Chief Counsel and incorporates specialist criminal law, family, youth and children's law and civil law counsel who work across Victoria. Five of these advocates are located regionally to improve access to high quality advocacy in regional Victoria. Further expansion into regional Victoria may also occur in 2025-2026.

Chambers operates as a centre of excellence with a commitment to support the development of legal staff and improve access to high quality advocacy in the legal assistance sector across Victoria.

The Chief Counsel sits on the Senior Leadership Team and is supported by an Associate Director, Chambers. The Deputy Chief Counsel role will be a part of Chambers' leadership team. A Briefing Manager leads a group of clerks and is responsible for allocating work to in-house counsel (and to the private bar) based on transparent and quality assurance-based processes and equitable briefing principles.

Chambers also manages organisational-wide projects, such as the [Equitable Briefing Strategy](#) and [Trial Counsel Development Programs](#), which deliver training opportunities to selected Junior Counsel from the Victorian Bar by partnering them with senior trial advocates.

Our VLA vision and values

Vision

Fair and inclusive justice where people have access to help, and laws and systems work for everyone.

Purpose

To help Victorians resolve legal problems and protect their rights, and to work with partners to improve laws and systems so they are fairer and more accessible.

Values

Our values are central to how we make decisions and deliver services. They guide our everyday actions, influence how we respond to legal need, and shape the way we work with clients, partners and each other.

Fairness

We are committed to fairness in society and facilitating fair and equitable access to legal and related support.

Care

We care about our clients and the community, and we approach our work with an awareness of the effects that trauma and discrimination can have. We treat each other with kindness and respect.

Courage

We approach our work with strength and confidence. We are guided by our values and what matters most to our clients and society.

Inclusion

We provide an inclusive environment for clients, staff and partners.

VLA is an Equal Opportunity Employer committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce.

We strongly encourage people from diverse backgrounds and abilities, including Australian First Peoples and refugees to apply for positions within our organisation. We will make reasonable adjustments to enable everyone to participate in our recruitment processes and to work productively and safely.

It is a key priority of VLA to support principles of self-determination by increasing employment for Australian First Peoples across all areas of VLA. We recognise that our workforce can benefit from the unique knowledge, skills and expertise of a diverse workforce including Australian First Peoples and in achieving a culturally safe and responsive service for our clients.

VLA is a Child-Safe organisation

VLA is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and recognises that children's rights need to be respected, their views welcomed and valued, and their concerns taken seriously. We additionally

acknowledge and appreciate the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Australian First Peoples children, which we respect and value.

Position Description approved by People and Workplace Services

Position Title: Recruitment & Retention Consultant

Date approved: 24 June 2026