

Position description

Position title:	Executive Director, People, Culture and Safety
Reports to:	Chief Executive Officer
Program area:	People, Culture and Safety
Location:	Naarm / Melbourne CBD, on Wurundjeri Country
Classification:	SES 2

Position Summary

The Executive Director, People, Culture and Safety provides strategic leadership of Victoria Legal Aid's (VLA's) people function, ensuring the organisation has the capability, culture and workforce needed to deliver high-quality services to the Victorian community. The role leads a contemporary, customer-focused directorate responsible for people strategy, organisational development, workforce planning, health, safety and wellbeing, employee relations, and culture and capability.

As VLA's senior people leader, the Executive Director is a trusted adviser to the CEO, Executive Management Group (EMG) and Board on workforce strategy, organisational culture, leadership capability and people-related risk. The role plays a critical part in building an inclusive, high-performing and sustainable organisation and ensuring that people strategy supports VLA's long-term success. The Executive Director also fosters a strong, values-driven culture within the People, Culture and Safety directorate, creating an environment of collaboration, accountability, inclusion and high performance.

The Executive Director leads initiatives to strengthen workforce capability, future readiness and employee wellbeing, while championing diversity, inclusion and cultural safety. The role also provides oversight of industrial relations, and ensures robust, people, systems and insights support, effective decision-making and organisational performance.

As a member of VLA's Executive Management Group, you will contribute to the leadership of the organisation. You will help shape strategy, influence key organisational decisions and support the effective allocation of resources, while fostering a culture of collaboration, integrity, accountability and high performance.

Responsibilities

1. Strategic leadership and business partnership

- Lead and develop a contemporary, customer-focused, multi-disciplinary human resource function to deliver high quality and responsive services across all VLA sites.
- Act as a key business partner to the CEO and the VLA Board, ensuring the people strategy is a primary driver of the organisation's long-term financial and operational sustainability.

- Provide expert, evidence-based and authoritative advice to the CEO, EMG and the VLA Board on complex people matters, workforce strategy, culture, capability, and risk.

2. Workforce capability and the future of work

- Drive whole-of-organisation workforce planning and capability frameworks, including succession strategies and leadership development pipelines to ensure future-readiness, with a particular focus on supporting a dispersed regional workforce.
- Move beyond traditional roles to build a skills-based ecosystem, focusing on leadership, risk management and digital literacy.
- Embed diversity, equity, inclusion, cultural safety and employee wellbeing into workforce systems and leadership practice.

3. Health, safety and wellbeing

- Lead and embed a proactive, organisation-wide approach to employee health, safety and wellbeing, with a particular focus on psychological health and safety, including preventing and responding to the impacts of vicarious trauma and other psychosocial hazards associated with many VLA roles.
- Oversee the development and continuous improvement of systems, practices and interventions that support workforce wellbeing and compliance with relevant legislation, including the Occupational Health and Safety (Psychological Health) Regulations 2025, and ensure robust governance, reporting and assurance arrangements for the identification, assessment and management of psychosocial risks.

4. Culture, employee experience and engagement

- Oversee performance development frameworks that promote accountability and shape and sustain a high-performing, safe, inclusive and respectful workplace culture.
- Define and lead the Employee Value Proposition, integrating total rewards (pay, flexibility, wellbeing and purpose) to attract and retain top-tier talent across all VLA offices.
- Actively manage organisational climate risks, including psychosocial safety and employee engagement.

5. Industrial and employee relations

- Set the enterprise bargaining strategy and oversee constructive relationships with unions and key external stakeholders.
- Build internal capability for managers to support timely response and pragmatic resolution of workplace issues.

6. Governance, risk, compliance and metrics

- Ensure compliance with relevant legislation, policies and standards, including employment, equal opportunity, occupational health and safety, privacy and integrity frameworks.
- Oversee robust people-related risk management frameworks, including audit responses and reporting.
- Manage reputational risk and provide transparent reporting on people metrics and cultural indicators to EMG and the VLA Board, providing insights into talent trends, wellbeing, productivity, and staff turnover.

Essential standards and capabilities

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

- Tertiary qualifications and/or equivalent professional experience in Human Resources, Industrial Relations, Law, Business or a related discipline (mandatory, postgraduate qualifications desirable).
- Membership of a relevant professional body (e.g. AHRI) is desirable.
- You must have the right to work in Australia (i.e., be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, permanent resident, or hold a valid visa).
- VLA follows a hybrid work structure where employees work from the office or remotely as required to perform the duties specific to each role. All VLA employees are subject to minimum levels of in-office and/or at-court attendance, as determined by operational needs. Hybrid work arrangements may on occasion be reduced or not available for this role due to the nature and responsibilities of the role.
- 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.
- All appointments are subject to reference checks and pre-employment misconduct screening. You will be required to undertake a police check during pre-employment screening or at any point during employment with VLA.

Occupational health and safety responsibilities at Victoria Legal Aid:

- This leadership position will require you to lead by example in actively supporting, promoting and implementing the requirements of VLA's health and safety management system, policies, procedures and processes. Managers at VLA actively support staff in participating in programs and initiatives that positively promote their health, safety and wellbeing.
- 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.

Key selection criteria

1. **Strategic leadership and organisational architecture:** Demonstrated executive-level experience leading a high-impact HR function in a complex organisation, ideally within a legal services or public sector environment. Proven ability to act as a strategic architect, aligning culture and workforce design with long-term organisational sustainability. Proven commercial acumen to translate business goals into innovative people strategies that drive measurable performance and future-readiness.
2. **Workforce transformation and capability:** Extensive experience in leading large-scale capability-building initiatives that align with shifting strategic priorities. Demonstrated ability to deliver

organisational wide initiatives, embedding a continuous learning mindset and developing leadership pipelines that are equipped to lead through digital and structural transformation.

3. **Executive influence and strategic partnership:** Highly developed interpersonal and influencing skills, with a proven ability to operate as a trusted advisor to the CEO and Board. A track record of negotiating complex outcomes and challenging senior leaders to align people-related decisions with the organisation's strategic vision. Proven ability to build enduring partnerships across a diverse stakeholder landscape, including staff, executives, Board members, unions, regulators, and government departments.
4. **Industrial relations and risk management:** Deep expertise in industrial and employee relations with proven success leading enterprise bargaining, managing complex industrial issues in a unionised environment, and mitigating industrial and reputational risks. Proven ability to move beyond reactive issue management to set a proactive industrial strategy that fosters constructive, long-term relationships. Advanced understanding of enterprise-wide people risks, with a track record of mitigating reputational, compliance, and psychosocial safety risks to ensure organisational resilience.
5. **Governance and legislative compliance:** Strong command of relevant Victorian and Commonwealth employment legislation, public sector governance requirements, and integrity frameworks. Demonstrated ability to operate effectively within high-accountability environments.
6. **Organisational performance:** Proven experience influencing the strategic vision, culture and policy direction of an organisation, and contributing to the achievement of organisation-wide objectives. Demonstrates a sophisticated ability to align organisational design and cultural initiatives with key performance indicators and service delivery goals.
1. **Champion diversity, equity and inclusion:** A proven ability to lead and embed systemic diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies that drive organisational performance. Demonstrated lived experience or understanding of the cultural norms and issues affecting people with cultural diversity, disability, First Peoples Australians, and LGBTQIA+ identification, with a proven ability to drive diversity and inclusion strategies and practices, and communicate effectively to foster a safe, respectful, and inclusive workplace.
7. **Values-based leadership:** A knowledge of the general business of VLA and a commitment to our vision and values.

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 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.

People, Culture and Safety

The People, Culture and Safety directorate support the development of VLA's people and our culture by ensuring VLA has effective staff, working within good processes and is supported by a productive culture based in our values.

Working with VLA's people, we establish human resource management and organisational development processes and practices that meet our regulatory obligations and reflect our values, support VLA's strategic workforce direction and drive the adoption of contemporary people management practices.

Our functions include:

- Health, Safety and Wellbeing
 - Learning and Organisational Development
 - People Operations: Recruitment and Retention; Business Partnering and Advisory Services; Payroll Services; Payroll Compliance; and Employee and Industrial Relations
 - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
 - People and Capability Projects
2. Strategic Workforce Planning
 3. Built Environment

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.

Other relevant information

- All appointments are subject to reference checks and pre-employment misconduct screening, which may include a police check. A preferred candidate with an adverse conduct history or criminal record will not necessarily be precluded from employment with VLA and each application will be considered on its merits.
- **VLA is an Equal Opportunity Employer** committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce. We strongly encourage people from diverse backgrounds and abilities, including 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 of First Peoples across all areas of VLA. We recognise that our workforce can benefit greatly from the unique knowledge, skills and expertise of a diverse workforce including 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 First Peoples children, which we respect and value.

Position Description approved by:

Position Title: Associate Director, People Operations

Date approved: April 2026