



Candidate Briefing Pack



Director of Legal Practice Candidate Briefing Pack

A career opportunity with Consumer Action Law Centre

July 2026

Director of Legal Practice

Consumer Action Law Centre · Prepared by Searchlight Group · July 2026

Thank you for your interest in the role of Director of Legal Practice at Consumer Action Law Centre. Searchlight Group is proud to be partnering with Consumer Action on this appointment. This pack is designed to give you a feel for the organisation, the role and the process, and we would welcome a confidential conversation at any point.

WHAT THIS PACK COVERS

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ABOUT CONSUMER ACTION

Consumer Action Law Centre is Australia's specialist consumer and financial services legal centre. Its purpose is to make life easier for people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage, and it pursues that purpose through an integrated model that brings together a legal practice, financial counselling, policy and campaigning. Nationally recognised and frequently in the media, Consumer Action has nearly doubled in size over the past three years, growing from around 40 people to 70, and is entering an ambitious new strategic period focused on systemic impact. The organisation is based in Melbourne.

Three things make this one of the most compelling legal leadership roles in the community legal sector.

- **A national platform.** You will lead the pre-eminent consumer law practice in the country, representing the organisation in the media, with regulators and funders, and at key stakeholder forums. The work of this practice shapes consumer policy and market conduct across Australia.
- **A mandate for strategic litigation.** Consumer Action's new strategy calls for deeper systemic work and a step up in litigation, alongside a service that assists around 4,500 consumers and workers every year. You will shape and support service design and intake, and you will build a new Domestic Building Legal Service in partnership with Justice Connect.
- **A deeply expert team.** You will lead a practice of around 20, including managing lawyers, specialist solicitors and paralegals, with a brief to develop and mentor lawyers, strengthen technical capability and build the strategic advocacy skills that drive systems change.

The role reports to the Chief Executive Officer and sits on Consumer Action's executive, working closely with Directors across policy and campaigns, financial counselling, engagement and operations in a highly integrated advocacy model.

The role at a glance

Reports to the Chief Executive Officer. Seven direct and thirteen indirect reports across a practice of around 20. Member of the executive leadership team. Oversight of legal assistance to around 3,500 consumers and 1,000 workers each year, strategic litigation in higher jurisdictions, and the new Domestic Building Legal Service delivered in partnership with Justice Connect.

PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES

In briefing this search, Consumer Action has been clear about what the first eighteen months look like. Candidates deserve the same clarity.

- **Get a handle on the operations.** The organisation's budget has doubled to around \$13 million and its systems are catching up with its growth. The first priority is disciplined operational foundations: better information flow, clear accountability, and the data to monitor performance and steer by.
- **Develop and unite the team.** The Managing Lawyers are capable and committed, and they are ready for investment in their development. The Director will build morale, capability and a culture of relational, accountable leadership across the practice.
- **Drive the shift from volume to strategy.** Consumer Action wants less phone-based advice work and more casework and litigation with systemic impact. A funded service redesign has already been completed; the Director's job is to implement it and keep the practice focused where it has the most impact.
- **Make the Domestic Building Legal Service succeed.** Delivered in partnership with Justice Connect, the DBLS is a significant new service at Consumer Action. The Director's focus is its strategic casework, policy and campaigning dimensions, and strengthening the partnership itself is an early priority.

The practice has come through a period of change, and it has kept performing on the commitment and quality of its people. That is a credit to the team, and it is also the opportunity: a leader who brings warmth, accountability and development will find a practice ready to respond quickly.

Working with the Chief Executive

The Director works for a Chief Executive who runs a collegiate executive and backs her Directors: fortnightly one-to-ones, fortnightly executive leadership meetings, and ad hoc collaboration on cross-organisational projects, and otherwise a deliberately hands-off style that gives the Director room to lead.

WHAT YOU WILL BRING

Consumer Action will consider candidates from a range of backgrounds, including community legal, government, regulators, private practice and in-house. The essentials below describe the substance of the role rather than a rigid checklist; if you bring most of this and the appetite for the rest, we would like to hear from you.

Essential

- **Litigation and consumer law depth.** A skilled legal practitioner with substantial litigation and dispute resolution experience, typically around ten years post-qualification, and specialist knowledge across some of our areas of expertise: consumer law, consumer credit, insurance, civil procedure and debt enforcement.
- **Eligibility to lead the practice.** Eligible for admission in Victoria as a principal solicitor authorised to receive trust money, and able to act as responsible person under the professional indemnity insurance scheme. Interstate candidates eligible for Victorian admission are warmly encouraged.
- **Executive leadership.** Experience leading a large practice or equivalent function, contributing at an executive table, engaging funders and regulators, and representing an organisation publicly and in the media.
- **Change leadership.** A track record of leading experienced teams through structural and strategic change with care, clarity and accountability.
- **Operational practice oversight.** Experience monitoring, motivating and guiding frontline staff and managers to work efficiently and productively in a busy practice to meet funder requirements and respond to high demand in the most effective way, using data.

Highly desirable

- **Community legal or legal assistance experience.** An understanding of community legal centres, legal aid settings or comparable high-volume services for people experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.
- **Strategic litigation.** Experience running or overseeing litigation in higher jurisdictions that serves broader policy and campaign objectives.
- **Service design and intake reform.** Experience reshaping intake, triage or service models, with comfort leading through technological change.

Disposition and fit

- **A warm heart that holds people to account.** A confident, self-aware and reflective leader that teams trust and follow.
- **Collaborative.** Energised by Consumer Action's integrated model, sharing insight and capability across policy, campaigns and financial counselling rather than running a practice apart.
- **Values driven and resilient.** Deeply committed to clients and to a fairer marketplace, with the steadiness to balance a demanding workload and competing priorities.

WORKING AT CONSUMER ACTION

Consumer Action is a values-driven organisation that backs its people. Beyond the platform and the work itself, candidates consistently point to four things.

- **Purpose you can see.** The practice's casework changes individual lives every day, and its strategic work changes the marketplace those lives are lived in.
- **Flexibility that is real.** Hybrid and flexible working arrangements are genuinely embedded, not just written down.
- **Development.** Sophisticated and novel legal work, with investment in technical capability and strategic advocacy skills across the practice.
- **An integrated model.** You work beside financial counsellors, policy specialists and campaigners, so the insights from casework travel all the way to systemic reform.

THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Searchlight Group manages every stage of this appointment. The process is rigorous, confidential and respectful of your time, and we provide feedback at each stage.

Stage	What happens	Indicative timing
1 • Apply or enquire	A CV and cover letter to Searchlight Group, or a confidential conversation first.	From now
2 • Initial conversation	A discussion with Michael Holdway about the role and your background.	Weeks 1 to 4
3 • Structured interview	A competency and behaviour-based interview with Searchlight Group.	Weeks 3 to 6
4 • Shortlist	Written assessments presented to Consumer Action.	Weeks 6 to 7
5 • Panel interviews	Interviews with Consumer Action's selection panel.	Weeks 7 to 8
6 • Referencing and offer	Referencing, verification and offer.	On selection
7 • Onboarding	A supported start in the role.	On appointment

Timing is indicative. Applications are reviewed as they are received, so early contact is encouraged.

HOW TO APPLY

Please send a CV and a short cover letter on what you would bring to the role through the website portal link: <https://searchlightgroup.com.au/jobs/director-legal-practice/>

Closing date for applications is midnight on **Friday 14th August 2026**. If you would prefer to test your interest before applying, Michael Holdway would welcome a confidential conversation.

ABOUT SEARCHLIGHT GROUP

Searchlight Group is a Melbourne-based executive search firm specialising in the public and for-purpose sectors, with deep networks across consumer advocacy, community legal and government. Michael Holdway leads this engagement personally, and every conversation is confidential.

Contact

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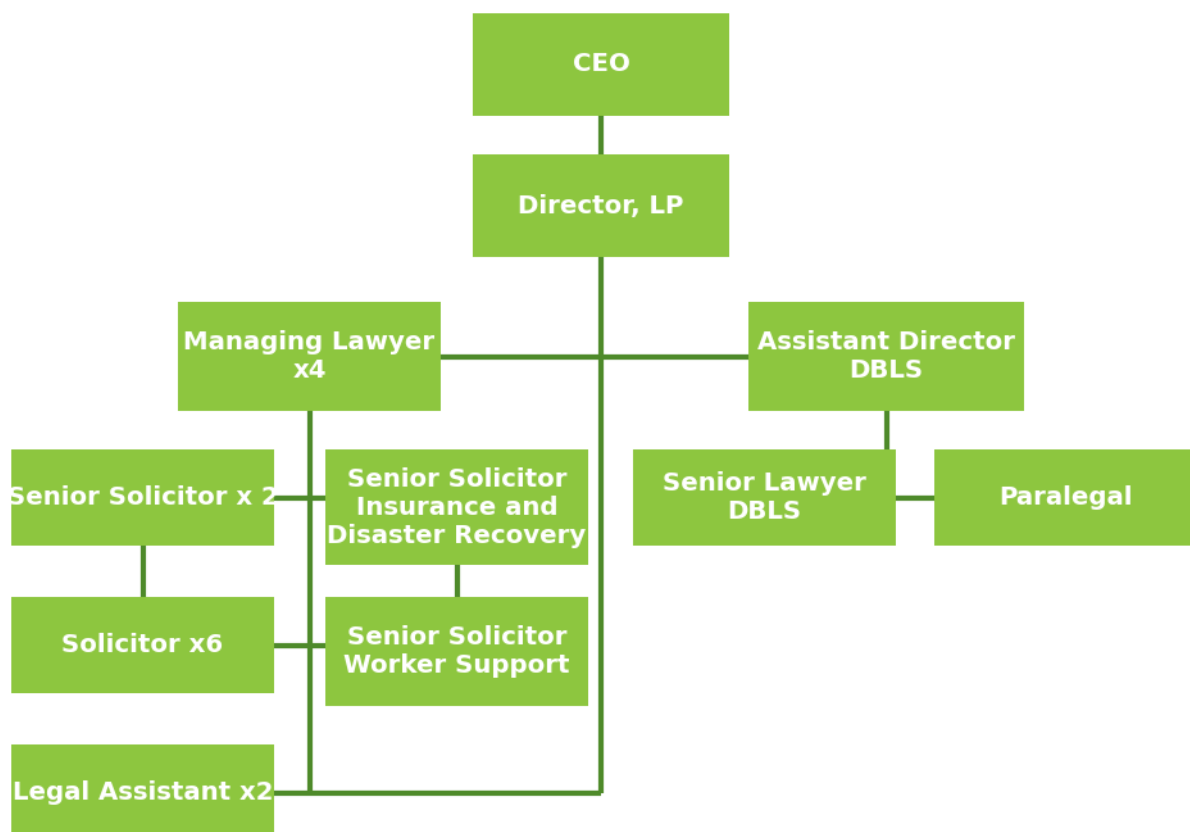
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This pack is provided in confidence for candidates considering the Director of Legal Practice role at Consumer Action Law Centre. It remains the property of Searchlight Group.

Position Description

Position	<i>Director of Legal Practice</i>
Reports to (position title)	<i>Chief Executive Officer</i>
Purpose:	<i>The Director of Legal Practice is a nationally recognised position leading Consumer Action Law Centre's legal practice to provide accessible, high quality legal services to consumers and workers and to bring about broader change through the integration of casework, engagement, policy and campaign work. The Director of Legal Practice is a member of Consumer Action's executive leadership responsible for delivering an ambitious new strategy. The DLP will lead the legal practice through substantial change into a more strategic and intensive legal practice and building in the Domestic Building Legal Service partnership with Justice Connect.</i>
Direct reports:	7
Indirect reports:	13
Scope	<i>A Strategic litigation files opened per annum: TBC Legal Assistance provided to consumers per annum: 3,500 approx. Legal assistance provided to workers per annum: 1000 approx.</i>



Key Accountabilities/Responsibilities:

- Lead a large Legal Practice, including direct management of managing lawyers, Assistant Director Domestic Building Legal Service and Legal Administrators; promoting the maintenance of high professional and ethical standards within the Legal Practice;
- Contribute to leading Consumer Action's strategic plan and leadership of organizational priorities including leading through strategic changes;
- Represent Consumer Action in the media, at key stakeholder forums and publicly to increase the impact of our work;
- Develop, mentor and inspire Managing Lawyers, Assistant Director DBLS and all members of the Legal Practice to grow in their own roles and careers;
- Oversight of strategic litigation in higher jurisdictions that achieves broader policy & campaign objectives and empowers clients through legal advocacy;
- Manage the Legal Practice trust account, authorise legal disbursements and other staff expenditure, act as responsible person under the Community Legal Centres Australia professional indemnity insurance (PII) scheme, dealing with complaints and PII notifications;
- Contribute to the management of risk across the centre, in particular through overseeing risk with respect to strategic litigation, client interests and conflict checking files and working collaboratively with the CEO to manage organisational risk as it arises;
- Oversight of the telephone legal advice line and intake processes and, together with the Assistant Director Service Design and Innovation, reshape the legal program to operate an efficient legal service which empowers clients and delivers impactful legal services for vulnerable and disadvantaged people in Victoria;
- Maintain and develop operational policies and procedures to ensure values-driven and disciplined delivery of the Legal Practice, as well as case management and data system improvements;
- Monitor performance of the Legal Practice including against funder targets, response rates to call and email volumes, quality of services, client outcomes and quality of data entry;
- Oversee non-casework activities of the legal practice, including case intake meetings, engagement and learning opportunities, responding to requests from regulators, follow-up data requests etc;
- Work closely with other Directors across the organization to promote initiatives and legal work (casework, regulator complaints, advocacy) in furtherance of Consumer Action policy and campaign objectives and support the legal practice to share powerful client stories that inspire systemic change and shape a fairer legal system;

- Lead the Legal Practice's effective integration with other areas of the organisation, including Engagement and Learning, Financial Counselling Practice, Operations and Policy & Campaigns.
- Undertake stakeholder liaison and networking, including with regulators, industry and the community legal sector, in order to promote the credible, trusted leadership of Consumer Action as the pre-eminent centre of expertise in consumer law, build an effective and sustainable community sector and shape a fairer legal system;
- Engage with funders and contribute to comprehensive, meaningful funder and impact reporting;
- Provide strategic, operational and professional leadership of the DBLS, delivered in partnership with Justice Connect, ensuring high-quality legal representation and litigation in complex domestic building disputes and contribution to systemic reform and advocacy. Support the Assistant Director DBLS to build and maintain an effective partnership with Justice Connect to produce strong consumer outcomes.

Qualifications/Experience/Specialist Skills:

- The Director of Legal Practice must be eligible for admission to practice in the State of Victoria as a principal solicitor authorised to receive trust money.
- Substantial experience in the conduct of litigation and dispute resolution is required, typically associated with 10 years POE.
- Deep specialist knowledge of consumer law, consumer credit law, bankruptcy law, civil procedure in both Federal and Victorian jurisdictions and debt enforcement law and procedure.

Competencies

- Excellent time management skills and ability to manage a busy workload and competing priorities under pressure;
- Ability to mentor, support and develop junior lawyers and managers to progress in their careers;
- Demonstrated ability to manage operations of a busy, time-limited practice with competing priorities to meet KPIs and strategic goals;
- Strategic thinker and ability to translate strategy into operations, and bring a team along with the strategic vision of the program and organization;
- Confident, self-aware and reflective leader, values driven and willing to both lead and contribute to the executive management team;
- Outstanding written and oral communication skills;
- Outstanding public speaking skills and demonstrated ability to effectively chair large and dynamic meetings;

- Excellent advocacy and negotiation skills;
- Excellent ability to empower, engage with, communicate with and assist vulnerable and disadvantaged clients;
- Demonstrated understanding of Consumer Action's vision, purpose, strategy and the role of the Legal Practice within an integrated practice model;
- Ability to lead high impact strategic litigation;
- Change agent: models adaptability, in particular concerning technological change;
- Excellent stakeholder management skills.