

Position description

Position title:	Aboriginal Community Engagement Officer (ACEO)
Reports to:	Regional Manager
Program area:	Regions and Service Delivery
Location:	Various
Classification:	WVR 3.2 - 32AO5C
Position type:	Ongoing

Position Summary

The role of Aboriginal Community Engagement Officer (ACEO) is a unique opportunity to contribute to Victoria Legal Aid (VLA)'s commitment to deliver accessible and high quality legal and non-legal assistance services to the First Nations communities across Victoria.

This is a specialist role focused on promoting and improving access to legal information and support for First Nations people primarily through community engagement, education and referrals.

In addition, the ACEO plays a crucial role in improving VLA's service delivery and advocacy for First Nations communities by creating access pathways to our services, providing cultural expertise, and support to First Nations VLA clients.

Responsibilities

1. Promote awareness of legal rights and services of VLA and other legal assistance providers to First Nations communities through stakeholder and community engagement.
2. Support First Nations community to access VLA and other legal related services through community liaison, outreach and building referral pathways and relationships with local stakeholders including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
3. Contribute to the design and delivery of community legal education and resources with a focus on legal needs and systemic issues which impact of First Nations Victorians.
4. Support delivery of VLA legal services to First Nations clients by sharing cultural expertise and perspectives with legal staff, liaising with services and providing client support and referrals.
5. Provide input into strategic VLA initiatives and projects to positively engage with First Nations people and community
6. Maintain accurate records of interactions with and for clients observing organisational confidentiality and privacy requirements and contribute to the capture of data (qualitative and quantitative) for the purpose of demonstrating the program's impact and informing the continuous improvement of VLA services.

Key selection criteria

1. Demonstrated knowledge of the diverse First Nations communities in Victoria and the social, demographic, economic, health and housing issues that impact access to justice and appropriate services to address these issues.
2. Ability to communicate effectively to build rapport and establish relationships with a wide range of audiences. Key relationships include First Nations peoples and community, legal and non-legal colleagues, external service providers including First Nations stakeholders.
3. Experience in using reporting systems that capture client information and data that informs service delivery and design.
4. Demonstrated problem-solving skills and ability to foster a collaborative approach to support clients.
5. Critical thinking to support the ongoing review and continuous improvement of VLA services and the ACEO Program with a view to refining service delivery.
6. Ability to plan work, balance competing priorities to meet deadlines with the ability to adapt and respond to changing environments and community needs to respond to changing environments and community needs.
7. A knowledge of the general business of VLA and a commitment to our vision and values.

Qualifications and experience

- This position is only open to Australian First Nations people (mandatory).
- Qualifications and/or experience demonstrating knowledge and skills working with First Nations people in justice or a community service-related area such as family violence, mental health, community services, housing and homelessness, drug and alcohol and youth (desirable).
- Development of engagement programs or activities (desirable).

Other relevant information

- VLA considers that being Aboriginal and/or a Torres Strait Islander person is a genuine occupational requirement for this position under the Section 12 Special Measures of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic).
- All appointments are subject to reference checks and pre-employment misconduct screening. A preferred candidate with a criminal record or adverse conduct history will not necessarily be precluded from employment as an ACE Officer at VLA.
 - o You will be required to consent to a police check.
 - o You will be required to undergo or hold a current Working with Children Check.
- 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 independently travel to outreach services, courts and tribunals, and between office locations to deliver quality services to our clients or for meetings or professional development.
- Occupational health and safety responsibilities at Victoria Legal Aid:
 - o 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 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.

First Peoples Services

The First Peoples Services directorate leads and supports VLA projects and initiatives which aim to address systemic racism and disadvantage and are shaped by self-determination and accountability to First Peoples.

The directorate's four priority domains of influence are:

1. Leading VLA staff and ways of working with and for First Peoples. VLA is an employer of choice for First Peoples and a significant provider of services for First Peoples.
2. Managing key stakeholder relationships. VLA proactively builds mutually beneficial relationships at the local, state and National level with Aboriginal services and Community-Controlled Organisations, with wide, strategic influence across both (state and federal) government and non-government sectors.
3. Reforming laws and systems. VLA pursues law reform and strategic advocacy which seek to meaningfully address systemic racism and injustice and promote the rights of First Peoples.
4. Responsiveness and accountability to First Peoples communities. VLA offers accessible, timely, culturally safe and responsive services and supports to First Peoples. VLA works to be informed and guided by client and community experience.

Aboriginal Community Engagement Officers

The Aboriginal Community Engagement Officer (ACEO) role was established as a pilot in response to a commitment made under Victoria Legal Aid's first Reconciliation Action Plan 2015-2018.

ACEOs are based in VLA's metropolitan and regional offices across the state – currently in Shepparton, Mildura, Ballarat, Bendigo, Morwell and Geelong, with significant expansion underway.

The ACEO program supports First Nations communities to identify and respond to legal problems and support access to VLA services and other legal related supports. Depending on the location, the activities of each ACEO will vary in response to the needs of local communities.

These roles will be working alongside VLA's lawyers and non-legal staff, as well as related areas in community legal education, stakeholder relationships, policy and research.

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 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 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 Australian First Peoples children, which we respect and value.

Position Description approved by People and Workplace Services

Position Title: Senior Recruitment and Retention Consultant

Date approved: 3 August 2026