

Workforce Relations Specialist

The Workforce Relations Specialist will support Victorian community sector organisations to understand and navigate the complexities of implementing reforms to the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry (SCHADS) Award.

Through practical guidance, resources, tools, education and advice, the role will help organisations interpret the changes, understand their obligations and plan for implementation. This includes classification translation and mapping, progression, qualifications and equivalent experience, lived experience, pay protection and transition arrangements.

The Specialist will support organisations to map the changes across their workforce and model wage and on-cost increases to inform implementation planning, funding discussions and advocacy. Working with sector partners and relevant experts, the role will build sector capability, promote consistent understanding and reduce the risk of misclassification and underpayment.

The role will also identify emerging implementation challenges and draw on sector evidence to inform VCOSS's policy and advocacy, including the funding required to meet increased workforce costs.

POSITION DETAILS

Team: Community and Sector Development

Classification: VCOSS EBA Level 6 (Dependent on experience)

Status: 0.8FTE - 1FTE, fixed term 18 months

Reports to: Director, Community and Sector Development (CSD) or delegated manager within CSD Team

Direct reports: None

Location: Level 15, 150 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. (Hybrid home-office model with remote considered)

THE ORGANISATION

The Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) is a charitable organisation working to end poverty and disadvantage in Victoria. As the peak body for Victoria's social and community sector, VCOSS activates collective power and influences change to achieve social and economic justice for current and future generations.

VCOSS' members include social service providers, peak bodies, advocacy groups led by lived experience, grassroots advocates and others working to improve the lives of Victorians experiencing barriers. Leveraging our unique cross-sector role, VCOSS advocates for the interests of Victorians experiencing poverty and disadvantage in policy debates, promotes strong and safe communities and services, and participates in public dialogues to advance a sustainable, caring and resilient society.

VCOSS's values drive how we work together with our members to achieve our purpose:

- We have the courage of our convictions
- We work with collaborative spirit
- We embed equity and respect in everything we do
- We have a growth mindset

Key accountabilities

Implementation guidance and support

- Guide VCOSS members and the broader community sector to understand SCHADS Award reforms and meet implementation requirements.
- Provide practical advice, resources and enquiry responses, including identifying matters that require specialist industrial relations, legal or workforce expertise.
- Assist organisations to interpret and apply classification and transition provisions, including progression, qualifications, equivalent experience, lived experience recognition and pay protection arrangements.
- Support sector organisations to map existing workforce classifications to the revised award structure and model wage and on-cost impacts to inform implementation planning, budgeting and funding advocacy.
- Identify, analyse and address common implementation challenges, working with sector partners, subject matter experts and industrial relations specialists to develop practical solutions and resources.
- Contribute to analysis, submissions and advocacy activities relating to Fair Work Commission proceedings, collaborating with the CEO, Director and COSS Network representatives to represent sector interests and influence policy outcomes.

Resources and tools

- Develop accessible guidance materials, templates and tools that help organisations plan and manage implementation.
- Work with sector organisations and experts to produce classification mapping resources, translation checklists, equivalency tools, case studies, payroll checklists and enterprise agreement transition guidance.
- Develop practical workforce mapping and costing tools to help organisations assess financial impacts, quantify cost increases and identify funding gaps
- Explain Fair Work Commission decisions and determinations in plain English, highlighting their practical implications for community sector organisations.
- Review and update resources to reflect award changes, emerging guidance and sector feedback.

Education and engagement

- Plan and deliver webinars, workshops and information sessions that strengthen sector understanding and confidence in implementing the reforms.
- Make complex industrial relations requirements accessible and relevant to different organisational contexts
- Develop education and training materials for internal and external audiences.
- Collaborate with sector partners, including the COSS Network and Australian Services Union, to support coordinated communication and consistent guidance where appropriate.

Monitoring and analysis

- Monitor relevant Fair Work Commission decisions, Fair Work Ombudsman guidance, annual wage review outcomes, and government and union announcements.
- Identify recurring enquiries, implementation challenges and emerging risks to inform sector support and advocacy priorities.
- Draw on organisational cost modelling and sector feedback to assess implementation costs and inform VCOSS's advocacy for adequate funding to meet increased workforce costs.
- Prepare internal briefings, contribute to policy and advocacy materials, and track key implementation milestones and timelines.

Collaboration reporting and evaluation

- Work collaboratively across VCOSS, particularly within the Community and Sector Development team.
- Build constructive relationships with members, sector partners, funders and relevant agencies.
- Maintain accurate records of enquiries, guidance provided, engagement activities and resource use.
- Contribute to project reporting and evaluation, drawing on implementation trends and stakeholder feedback to improve support.

Organisational relationships

Internal: CEO and Executive Leadership Team; Community and Sector Development team; other VCOSS staff as required.

External: VCOSS members and community sector organisations; COSS Network partners; Australian Services Union; funders and government agencies; industrial relations specialists and other relevant stakeholders.

Key selection criteria

Essential

- At least five years' relevant experience in industrial relations, workplace relations, award interpretation or a closely related field.
- Strong understanding of Australian employment frameworks, including modern awards, enterprise agreements and the Fair Work system.
- Demonstrated experience helping organisations navigate complex workplace relations requirements through practical guidance, resources, tools, education and advice.
- Strong analytical, interpretation, problem-solving and dispute resolution skills, with the ability to apply complex requirements to practical workplace situations.
- Ability to support workforce classification mapping and analyse wage and on-cost implications to inform implementation planning and funding requirements.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to translate complex requirements into clear explanations, accessible resources and practical guidance.
- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to build productive relationships and work sensitively with diverse stakeholders.
- Demonstrated ability to work independently, exercise sound judgement and manage competing priorities.
- Commitment to the community sector and gender equality in the workplace.
- Tertiary qualifications in industrial relations, workplace relations or a related discipline.

Desirable

- Strong knowledge of the SCHADS Award and its interaction with enterprise agreements and unionised workplaces.
- Experience working in or with the community services sector
- Experience designing and delivering webinars, training or information sessions.
- Familiarity with HR and payroll systems and the operational requirements of Award classification and transition planning.
- Tertiary qualification in law, industrial relations or other relevant technical/specialist degree.