

Position Description

Position Title:	Senior Family Lawyer
Purpose	You will work within an innovative, agile and evidence-led legal service. You will leverage your skill as a legal practitioner, across health, housing and community service settings, and in service of those are genuinely engaged or wanting to be engaged in treatment, recovery, and therapeutic interventions that will support their ongoing wellbeing.
Classification:	Salary Negotiable, subject to skills and experience. Conditions are set out under the SCHADS Award.
Reports to:	Principal Lawyer.
Location:	St Kilda + other outreach locations, including Geelong.
Employment Status:	2-year fixed term contract.
Hours:	Full-time or Part-time (negotiable).
Probationary period:	A six-month probationary period applies.

The Organisation

First Step Legal (FSL) was established in 2008 as a Health Justice Partnership (HJP) within First Step, a not-for-profit mental health and addiction clinic in St Kilda. FSL only receives referrals from its health, housing and community service partners; its pro-bono legal advice, casework and representation is focused on clients who are genuinely engaged or wanting to be engaged in treatment, recovery, and therapeutic interventions that will support their ongoing wellbeing.

FSL is NAS-accredited, a member of the Federation of Community Legal Centres, and reaches the most marginalised and vulnerable in the community via its partnerships with five organisations: the First Step Program, Windana Residential Rehabilitation, Alfred Health (St Kilda Road Outpatient Clinic), Better Health Network, and Launch Housing across South Melbourne and East St Kilda.

FSL predominately practices in criminal law, family violence (both victim/survivors and perpetrators) and family law. FSL also maintains an infringement clinic and can assist its clients with applications to the victims of crime financial assistance scheme. Many of our clients have several different legal matters meaning we provide ongoing legal representation and case work, limited assistance – including discrete advice or a supported referral in some areas of law, (e.g., tenancy, debt) – and secondary consultations to our partner practitioners, which may include referrals for clients with legal matters that are out of scope for our service.

FSL currently comprises a small close-knit team including Acting Director of Legal Services, Principal Lawyer, Senior Criminal Lawyer, Senior Civil Lawyer, Family Lawyer, and Generalist Lawyer. FSL lawyers are supported by a Social Worker, Financial Counsellor, Practice Administrator, and Volunteer Paralegals.

The Vision

Our mission is to increase access to justice for particularly vulnerable people by bringing integrated legal help to them, wherever they present for support. We are committed to:

- Recognising the harms many of our clients have experienced and responding in a compassionate, trauma informed way.
- Achieving high quality legal outcomes that will assist in reducing our clients' further contact with the justice system.
- Encouraging our clients to engage with treatment that will enhance their wellbeing and reduce further contact with the justice system.
- Supporting our clients holistically, with legal and non-legal needs.

Funding Sources

FSL receives funding from a variety of sources including philanthropic, corporate, government and quasi-government sources. This includes Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program (CSLP) funding, National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) Funding, Victorian Department of Justice (DOJ) funding, and Victorian Legal Services Board (VLSB) funding.

The Role in Context

The aim of the role is to deliver an integrated family violence and family law service to the most vulnerable and marginalised in our community, who are engaged or wanting to engage with therapeutic interventions that meet their co-occurring needs, and support improved personal wellbeing. The impact of the role is measured as part of FSL's ongoing evaluation of the efficacy of embedding a lawyer in health, housing and community service settings, and this evidence-based approach informs FSL's policy and advocacy work.

This role leads FSL'S family law practice across all five partnership organisations accepting referrals for clients a variety of family matters including divorce applications, parenting, property/financial matters and Family Violence Intervention Orders acting for Affected Family Members and Respondents.

This role provides supervision to one other family lawyer (who is on a supervised practicing certificate).

Significantly, FSL has received funding under the National Partnership in Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Response to design and deliver a specialist legal program addressing male family violence. Centred around our core objectives of safety, wellbeing and accountability, this program is known as SWAP.

SWAP provides legal information, supported referrals, discrete legal advice, and ongoing legal casework and representation to men who use family violence. SWAP leverages FSL's partnerships to offer an integrated legal response that hold men visible and accountable for their use of family violence, while promoting their ongoing meaningful engagement with appropriate programs and services.

This role will regularly interface with SWAP, and as such, you will be extensively trained in the principles of motivational change and Men's Behaviour Change Programs and receive mentorship from thought-leaders in the family violence and behaviour change space, to evolve your practice in working with Respondents, specifically.

Key Responsibilities

Key Responsibility Areas
<p><u>Legal Advice and Casework Services</u></p> <p>Provide high quality legal advice, representation, and casework, including by -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing advice and representation (negotiation, FDR and litigation) in the variety of settings where FSL operates, with a particular focus on family law and family violence as part of an integrated HJP model.• Providing supervision and mentorship to a family lawyer on a supervised practising certificate, across the same areas.• Understanding client goals, assessing urgency and eligibility for service provision, and identifying additional legal and non-legal needs.• Assisting with FSL's paralegal volunteer program, including supporting training, task allocation and supervision as a subject matter expert.• Ensuring compliance with professional indemnity insurance scheme.
<p><u>Integrated Practice</u></p> <p>Work collaboratively in accordance with FSL values, including by -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contributing to the development of new HJP projects, including developing and delivering training to partner practitioners.• Accepting referrals from a variety of HJP settings.• Providing legal information and/or facilitating high quality legal and non-legal referrals for individuals not eligible for more intensive FSL services.• Collaborating with the FSL Team and partnership practitioners to develop case plans for clients and facilitating referrals to other members of the team and any relevant agencies.

- Contributing to the delivery of integrated, high quality legal and therapeutic outcomes for clients, supportive of their continued recovery and rehabilitation in the community.

Client Information, Reporting and Law Reform

Maintain a comprehensive client record in the client management system, including by -

- Accurately entering all client based and non-client-based activity in a timely way in Action Step.
- Seeking client's permission to share information within the HJP as required by the case plan.
- Preparing documentation, case studies and reports for relevant parties as well as to support FSL grant acquittals as required.
- Contributing to the identification of systemic issues affecting the delivery of services and contribute to informing relevant policy.

Key Selection Criteria

Qualifications, Knowledge and Skills, Personal Attributes:

Mandatory Qualifications

- Full Practising Certificate to practice law in Victoria.
- At least four years' PAE in family law.

Highly Desirable

- Demonstrated experience working with Respondents in family violence service settings, including familiarity with the principals of motivational change and a men's behavioural change programs.
- Experience responding to the legal needs of people with addiction and mental health vulnerabilities and/or demonstrated knowledge of the impact of legal issues on mental health and addiction recovery and rehabilitation.
- Demonstrated commitment to access to justice, social justice, and equality.
- High level communication and negotiation skills with a demonstrated ability to use those skills to share knowledge and build relationships with diverse clients and stakeholders.
- Ability to work both autonomously and collaboratively as a member of a multidisciplinary team.

Desirable

- Demonstrated ability to stay focussed under pressure and prioritise competing demands.
- Computer literacy skills in direct client data entry, word processing and internet use. (FSL practice is managed by ActionStep).

Approval and Acknowledgement

Date PD created:	05 January 2026
Date PD last reviewed:	N/A
PD Approved by:	Acting Director of Legal Services
Date of approval:	06 January 2026