

Mental Health Legal Centre

Lawyer

The role

The Lawyer will provide legal assistance to clients in our Inside Access and Mental Health Tribunal (MHT) advocacy programs, as well as our Health Justice Partnerships and Generalist programs as required.

The Lawyer is required to attend the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC) once a week and Tarrengower Prison approximately once a quarter. They will also attend other outreach, court, tribunal and stakeholder venues to provide advice, consultation and case work in various practice areas.

The Lawyer will deliver education sessions in various settings, including DPFC and Tarrengower, proactively network with key stakeholders, identify systemic issues and think strategically.

The incumbent will have the opportunity to provide their clients with a wraparound legal service, working collaboratively with corrections, community services and partners. This is an exciting opportunity for someone with exceptional organisational and communication skills, energy and vision. A core part of the Lawyer's role will be to ensure that the project targets as listed and identified in the project agreements are delivered within project plans and reported to the Principal Lawyer and Leadership Team.

Mental Health Legal Centre Overview

The Mental Health Legal Centre (MHLC) is an independent, not-for-profit, specialist legal centre in Victoria.

For over 35 years, MHLC has delivered accessible legal services to consumers of mental health services and to people who are incarcerated. We deliver community education and advocate for systematic change that enhances the rights of people experiencing mental health issues. Our interdisciplinary team (law, paralegal, and financial counselling) provide a range of innovative services in the community, in treatment facilities and in prisons. We recognise that health and legal issues do not occur in isolation, and we work in partnership with other agencies to provide integrated services that address the needs of some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Vision

Mental health: rights, choice, agency

Purpose

MHLC aims to increase access to social and legal justice for people experiencing mental health and legal issues. A key element of social justice is that everyone is entitled to equal access to opportunities for positive health and well-being. We work within a social model of mental health, recognising that positive mental health is influenced by social factors. We provide interdisciplinary supports including legal assistance, advocacy and financial counselling to address our clients' unmet legal and non-legal needs.

Principles that underpin our work

All of our services are designed to reduce the barriers to positive mental health.

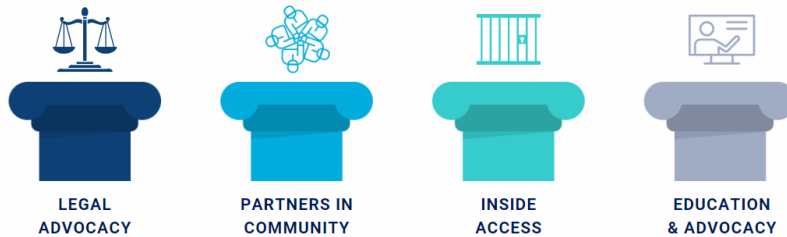


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About the position

The MHLC currently operates under four program pillars:



The Lawyer is responsible for the provision of legal advice and representation provided under the Inside Access Program and is required to regularly represent consumers before the Mental Health Tribunal as part of our Mental Health Tribunal Advocacy Program. There may be some work required in our Health Justice Partnership and Generalist Programs as well.

About you

You are a lawyer with a passion for human rights and providing legal assistance to clients in disadvantaged communities.

You are able to:

- Deliver high quality, accurate legal advice and manage casework
- Develop strong relationships with other supporting organisations/services
- Communicate with clients and stakeholders from diverse backgrounds
- Be responsible for a high volume and complex caseload
- Manage client expectations; identify and narrow issues quickly
- Multi-task competing priorities to work towards deadlines
- Appreciate the CLC environment and resource allocation

You will be joining an established and cohesive team that has a strong culture of collaboration and a framework of continuous improvement.

Position Description – Lawyer

Key responsibilities

With supervision and support:

Legal Service Delivery

- Provide legal assistance to clients in our practice areas by way of:
 - Information, referral, advice, and casework;
 - Ongoing casework including regular appearance work predominantly in metropolitan Magistrate's and Children's Courts. Other appearance work that may be required includes mediations, tribunal appearances and other advocacy forums; and
 - Deliver place-based services at partner organisations as required;
- Deliver high standards of service to clients often with complex and disadvantaged needs in a dynamic environment with a high-volume caseload;
- Prioritise strategic casework and services and link these to our law reform, policy, and community engagement work;
- Ensure quality and consistency of delivery of legal services in accordance with MHLC policies;
- Participate in legal team meetings and debriefing sessions with colleagues;
- Ensure the complete and accurate collection of client data; and
- Assist with other program areas within the CLC as required.

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Stakeholder engagement, education and law reform

- Build and maintain referral pathways and operational relationships with courts, corrections staff, tribunals and local service delivery partners to achieve better outcomes for clients;
- Participate in stakeholder and community meetings as required; and
- Develop and deliver legal education to community members and service providers in accordance with a work plan.

Other roles and responsibilities

- Comply with policy and procedures and maintain currency through training that relate to legal and regulatory requirements and our ways of working;
- Seek out training opportunities to further enhance professional development in accordance with duties as required within this position after consultation with your manager;
- Participate in regular supervision and meet agreed performance indicators and work plan activities;
- Undertake any reasonable additional tasks as directed by management; and
- MHLC is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of its staff. MHLC and its staff must comply with a range of statutory requirements, including equal opportunity, occupational health and safety and privacy laws. MHLC is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people.

Ways of Working

- Support colleagues and the team environment, we value debriefing and accessing supports when needed;
- Contribute actively in meetings and staff days – we value your input and feedback helps us improve;
- Maintain organisational values and behaviours with energy, transparency and vision; and
- Support the achievement of the MHLC Strategic Plan, through team planning and work plans.

Performance indicators

- Perform effectively the duties and responsibilities in your position description with commitment and diligence;
- Approach your work with adaptability and openness to feedback and learning, including seeking out relevant opportunities to support your professional development;
- Use your best endeavours to protect and promote MHLC's interests, reputation and strategic priorities;
- Contribute actively to meetings and team discussions - we value your expertise and input;
- Promote a positive culture and support your colleagues. Maintain organisational values and behaviours as outlined within the Code of Conduct, including cultural safety and awareness; and
- Maintain all qualifications, licenses, skills, knowledge and competencies relevant to your employment with MHLC.

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Key selection criteria

Essential (Skills, knowledge, experience)

1. Legal practice experience or the ability to quickly acquire it and the capacity to manage a high volume and complex workload in child protection, mental health, civil (family violence and intervention order), infringements law and other legal areas including advice, casework and representation in courts and tribunals;
2. Exceptional oral and written communication skills, including legal drafting, negotiation and advocacy;
3. Exceptional interpersonal skills including a demonstrated ability to engage with people who have multiple and complex needs and vulnerabilities including an understanding of trauma and mental ill health;
4. Experience networking and building relationships with a range of stakeholders including corrections, health services, courts, tribunals, police, community support agencies, and government and a capacity to engage in outreach as required;
5. Demonstrated capacity to work in a team and support a cohesive team environment, as well as to work independently with accountability under the direction of the Principal Lawyer;
6. Commitment to social justice and alignment with MHLC vision and principles.

Desirable (Skills, knowledge, experience, qualification and/or training)

1. Knowledge and experience in community legal sector, including legal education and development, policy, and law reform.

Prerequisites

1. Eligible for practicing certificate. MHLC will reimburse the cost of applying for or renewing a practicing certificate and the employee must continue to meet the requirements for holding a practicing certificate; and
2. Correctional facility security clearance including criminal history checks.

Any changes to these prerequisites after employment commences must be communicated to the employer immediately by the employee.

Hours of work

This position is a full-time position to be worked 5 days a week (38 hours), one day a week at DPFC and the remainder at our office in West Melbourne. Work from home and flexible work arrangements are available as per our policies and guidelines. Work from home arrangements will be considered following successful completion of the six month probationary period.

This position is subject to state funding.