

Lawyer – Partners in Community

Mental Health Legal Centre Overview

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

For almost 40 years, MHLC has delivered accessible legal services to consumers of mental health services, to people experiencing homelessness, 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.

OUR PURPOSE:

Mental health: rights, choice, agency

VISION for MHLC:

The specialist mental health legal centre that is recognised for its capacity to lead wisely and respond effectively to the needs of the community.

VISION for the community in which MHLC operates:

A community where every person experiencing mental ill health, psychosocial disability, or vulnerability knows and can exercise their legal and human rights, and where systemic legal and policy change ensures dignity, safety, and equity for all.

OUR AIMS:

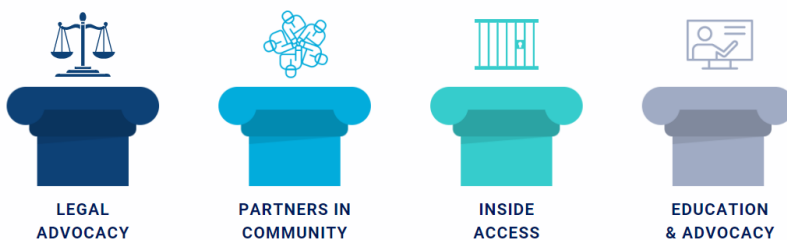
Increase access to justice for people experiencing mental health and legal issues because **everyone is entitled to equal access to opportunities for positive health and wellbeing** by working within a social model of mental health, recognising that positive mental health is influenced by social factors and providing **multi-disciplinary supports** to address our clients unmet legal and non-legal needs.

STRATEGIC INTENT:

Delivering social justice in locked environments (prisons and hospitals) and in environments where coercive control exists. Advocating for change in public policy for the people no one else is helping, those out of sight and those with mental ill health or impacted by legal issues

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 Partners in Community and Generalist programs 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 Inside Access Program as well.

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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 which may require conferences/mediation and appearances in courts, tribunals, and/or other advocacy forums;
 - Deliver place-based services at partner organisations as required;
- Deliver high standards of service to clients often with complex and disadvantaged needs;
- 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.

Stakeholder engagement, education and law reform

- Build and maintain referral pathways and operational relationships with courts, 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 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 to 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;

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- 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.

Key selection criteria

Essential (Skills, knowledge, experience)

1. Legal practice experience or the ability to quickly acquire it and the capacity to manage a significant and complex workload in mental health, civil and infringements law including advice, casework and representation in courts and tribunals;
2. Exceptional oral and written communications 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 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; and
6. Commitment to social justice and alignment with MHLC's purpose, vision and aims.

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

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

Prerequisites

8. Eligible for practising certificate. MHLC will pay for the cost of applying for or renewing a practising certificate and the employee must continue to meet the requirements for holding a practising certificate; and

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), in the West Melbourne office, at outreach locations at least once a week, noting that work from home is available upon successful probation and in accordance with our policies and procedures.

This position is subject to state funding.