

Position Description

Position Title	Principal Solicitor	Salary Package	Based on NT Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 8.3 plus benefits and packaging
Team	Executive	Conditions	DCLS Enterprise Agreement 2012
Reports to	Executive Director	Employment type	Full time
Direct reports	TAS and GLS Team Leaders SDRS Team Leader (in collaboration with ED) Legal Practice / Volunteer Coordinator Paralegals and Interns	Duration	2 years plus an option to renew dependant on funding

About DCLS

Darwin Community Legal Services (DCLS) is located Larrakia country. We acknowledge the Larrakia people as the Traditional Owners of the Darwin region and we acknowledge Traditional Owners of lands throughout the Northern Territory. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

DCLS is a free, confidential multi-disciplinary, community legal service which provides legal help, support, and advocacy to help people ensure their rights. Some of our services are focused on Darwin or the Top End, and some are Territory wide.

With over 60 volunteers contributing via our night-time and Saturday legal advice services and in other ways, over 25 staff and 30 years of operation, DCLS has a long history of being a striving collaboration for positive change. Our legal help and support teams, which consist of the General Legal Team, Tenancy Advice Service and Seniors Rights and Advocacy Service, are located together enabling integrated client support.

In all we do, we work to empower our diverse communities.

DCLS is the only generalist legal community legal service in the NT, and actively pursues opportunities to increase operations in areas of need. DCLS works to promote awareness and understanding and advocate and collaborate for change that promotes fairness and justice.

DCLS work includes:

- General Legal Service (GLS) - information, referral, legal advice and representation in areas of civil law affecting basic rights - Darwin, Palmerston and surrounds, and NT wide where appropriate resources available.
- Tenants' Advice Service (TAS) – information, referral, legal advice, legal help including representation for tenants - NT wide.
- Seniors and Disability Rights Service (SDRS) - support, advocacy and empowerment by, with and for seniors and people with a disability – especially Top End but NT wide.

- Special projects including Older Person Abuse and NDIS appeals.
- Collaborative community legal education, projects, organising and advocacy for reforms which promotes rights, justice and inclusion.

About this role

The Principal Solicitor is responsible for the DCLS legal practice including individual client work, community legal education, community empowerment and law reform.

The legal practice consists of the GLS and TAS and the Principal Solicitor is responsible for relevant aspects relating to the SDRS in accordance with the Community Legal Centres Australia Risk Management Guide.

The Principal Solicitor position aims to ensure that the legal practice and DCLS operations delivers quality, accessible help and are striving, energetic and effective in advancing social justice.

The Principal Solicitor:

- Provides leadership, management, and supervision
- Promotes positive teamwork, collaboration, and creativity
- Undertakes legal casework including initial and ongoing client matters and carries an appropriate caseload
- Supports, provides backup and oversight for GLS and TAS Team Leaders
- Supports and collaborates with the SDRS Team Leader especially regarding the legal practice interface, quality, coordination, and risk management
- Encourages, supports, and empowers staff and volunteers and
- Supports, facilitates and closely collaborates with the DCLS Corporate Services Team

The Principal Solicitor position provides leadership and expertise in relation to:

- DCLS activities to increase access to justice in the NT including increasing DCLS resources, coverage, and positive impacts
- Legal practice management including systems, workflows and routines which maximise productivity, quality, empowerment, and positive impacts
- Policies and procedures required to deliver, support, and enhance the legal practice.

The Principal Solicitor position is a member of:

- The DCLS Executive Team (Executive Director and Principal Solicitor)
- The DCLS Leadership Group (Executive Team with Team Leaders)

Key duties and responsibilities

Legal Practice

- Lead, support and facilitate the DCLS legal practice and the work of the GLS, TAS and SDRS Team Leaders to maximise services and positive impacts consistent with DCLS objectives and strategic plan, funding agreements, legal professional requirements, Community Legal Centres Australia Risk Management Guide, National Legal Assistance Data Standards and the DCLS Eligibility and Priority Guidelines.
- Manage and mitigate risk across the service in conjunction with the Executive Director and the Leadership Team.
- Maintain and enhance systems, policies, procedures and ethos for quality, efficient and responsive operations.
- Maintain, implement and improve:
 - Legal practice workflows from the point of first contact
 - Policies and practices that guide and support the legal practice including case and client management
 - Legal resources required by the legal practice including electronic tools, forms, precedents and guides
- Actively promote a culture of continuous improvement to consistently meet quality standards and high standards of client and stakeholder service
- Provide legal input, guidance and assistance on projects conducted by DCLS
- Facilitate pro bono legal assistance and the involvement of law students in DCLS including through clinical, internship and PLT placements
- Ensure timely and accurate:
 - Collection and management of client data
 - Record keeping regarding service provision in line with quality, documented, procedures
- Collaborate with the GLS Team Leader and Volunteer Coordinator to support information sessions and inductions for the Volunteer Advice Sessions.

Networks and advocacy

- Participate and/or ensure DCLS participation in relevant networks and advocacy (local, NT wide, national etc.)
- Ensure DCLS leadership when required, appropriate and possible on NT social justice issues
- Help build, strengthen, and facilitate networks and advocacy to promote social justice in the NT

Community Legal Education

- Maintain, enhance, and evaluate DCLS's collaborative community legal education (CLE) efforts
- Ensure CLE approaches advance DCLS's objectives about increasing voice, inclusion, and empowerment
- Contribute to the CLE program including delivering CLE

Law Reform

- Maintain awareness of the political, social, and economic environment and develop and utilize opportunities to ensure that DCLS is effective in pursuing access to justice, including emphasising voice, participation and resources of our communities.
- Collaborate in:
 - Identifying and raising awareness of systemic issues affecting our communities
 - Advancing responsive proposals for inclusion, reform, and justice, and
 - Increasing the capacity of our communities, stakeholders, and collaborators to do so.

Leadership/Management

- Support the Executive Director's overall management of DCLS
- Provide professional leadership, encouragement, supervision and support for staff and volunteers and support engagement, productivity, and commitment to achieve objectives
- Lead and manage the legal practice to deliver high quality, strategic, innovative, and effective legal assistance
- Maintain and improve performance and productivity reviews and professional development planning for staff in the legal practice

Teamwork/collaboration

- Actively contribute to DCLS effectiveness through contextual and situational awareness, support to colleagues, demonstrating respect and empathy, development of strong relationships and taking responsibility
- Keep Team Leaders, staff and colleagues informed of developments/matters as appropriate that may impact their work
- Maintain professionalism through reliability and punctuality and ensure delivery of deadlines and commitments.
- Represent DCLS in a range of strategic networks and develop and maintain strong relationships with other community service providers
- Support the Executive Director's overall management of DCLS
- Other duties as reasonably directed by the Executive Director

Other duties

- Other duties as reasonably directed by the Executive Director

Accountabilities

- Reports to the Executive Director
- Adhere to DCLS values, policies. and procedures
- Manage resources to meet strategic objectives and changing priorities
- Assist in development of legal services budgets and monitor expenditure

- Promote the effectiveness of Executive, the Leadership Team, management, planning and operational processes
- Attend and participate in staff meetings, including Team, casework, non-casework and other meetings, as appropriate.
- Prepare written reports to or for to the Executive Director, the DCLS Board, Annual Report etc
- Develop work plans and report regularly against these, achieving expected results and performance measures

SELECTION CRITERIA

Essential

1. Demonstrated understanding of progressive legal advocacy and awareness of the current issues relating to social justice and law reform in disadvantaged communities in the NT
2. Demonstrated capacity to work collaboratively in empowering vulnerable and disadvantaged clients and communities.
3. Substantial legal practice and casework experience and effectiveness in at least some of the following areas of law: social security; human rights and discrimination; credit and debt; consumer law; employment law; residential tenancy; seniors rights; adult guardianship; disability law including NDIS.
4. Capacity and willingness to undertake legal casework including complex matters and to make a significant and continuing contribution towards legal service targets and objectives.
5. Demonstrated effectiveness in leading legal practice teams and a strong commitment to teamwork.
6. Demonstrated skills in negotiation, organisation, time management, effective communication, and a high level of computer literacy.
7. Familiarity with:
 - a. National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP)
 - b. Community Legal Services Australia Risk Management Guide
 - c. Community Assistance Services System (CLASS)
 - d. National Legal Assistance Data Standards.

Desirable

8. Experience in legal practice and/or other relevant roles in the NT
9. Driving licence

Prerequisites

1. Eligible for an unrestricted legal practicing certificate in the NT
2. Provide a current national police record check
3. Eligibility for a NT Ochre Card
4. Up to date Covid vaccinations

Salary and other benefits

Negotiated salary of \$120,000 plus super, with salary packaging options (up to \$15,899 per annum of the salary, tax-free as a fringe benefit). 6 week's annual leave, including 17.5% leave loading. You'll also be entitled to 15 days personal leave. DCLS is an equal opportunity employer

