

PIAC Practical Legal Training Placement

Volunteer Position

Job Description

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) is a community legal centre that specialises in strategic litigation and systemic advocacy on social justice and human rights issues. PIAC tackles difficult issues that have a significant impact upon people who are marginalised or facing disadvantage, ensuring basic rights are enjoyed across the community.

Our work addresses issues such as:

- reducing homelessness;
- access for people with disability to basic services like public transport, education and online services;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice;
- access to energy and water for low-income and vulnerable consumers;
- the exercise of police powers;
- the rights of people in detention, including the right to proper medical care; and
- government accountability.

The Volunteer Practical Legal Training Placement contributes to the provision of a successful, innovative, and responsive legal practice through assisting with PIAC's Homeless Persons Legal Service ('HPLS') intake process for new client referrals and queries and with PIAC's litigation and associated policy and law reform work.

About the role

Successful applicants will be recruited to work across:

- PIAC's strategic litigation team;
- the HPLS, including client-facing intake processes; and/or
- PIAC's Towards Truth project.

Strategic Litigation is PIAC's largest team. It undertakes strategic legal casework, specialising in test cases, and brings legal expertise to systemic policy and law reform issues. The team both leads and contributes to priority projects that seek social justice and systems change. Our work is focused on advocating for people and communities who are marginalised and facing disadvantage.

The Towards Truth team coordinates and carries out the research required for the Towards Truth project. Towards Truth is a collaboration between PIAC and the Indigenous Law Centre (ILC) at UNSW that responds directly to the call of the Uluru Statement from the Heart for truth-telling. We are building a comprehensive database and website of the laws and policies that have impacted the lives of First Nations people since 1788. You can find out more about Towards Truth by visiting www.towardstruth.org.au.

HPLS is PIAC's largest project, providing free legal assistance for people experiencing homelessness at outreach clinics in Sydney and the Hunter region. The project also provides a specialist criminal law service in Sydney, with a particular focus on diverting clients with mental health conditions from the criminal justice system.

PLT placements will include two career mentoring sessions; one towards the beginning of the placement, and another towards the end.

Relationships

The Strategic Litigation legal practice is made up of two Principal Solicitors, Senior Solicitors, Solicitors, Legal Secretaries and Practical Legal Training Placements.

The Towards Truth team is made up of a Project Director, Project Co-ordinator, Legal Research Officer and two Research Assistants, along with interns, secondees and volunteers from time to time.

The Homeless Persons Legal Service is made up of one Principal Solicitor, Senior Solicitors, Secondee solicitors, a Coordinator, Paralegal, Policy Officer, Streetcare Project Officer and Practical Legal Training Placements.

The Principal Solicitors are responsible for the legal practice, including all decisions affecting the practice and supervision of all lawyers and legal staff.

A Solicitor is responsible for the day-to-day supervision of Practical Legal Training Placements and the operation of the Practical Legal Training Placement Program.

Practical Legal Training Placements may be required to undertake work for and under the supervision of all lawyers engaged in the legal practice.

Decision Making

The Principal Solicitors are ultimately responsible for the conduct of the legal practice. Issues relevant to the legal practice are discussed at legal practice meetings that all members of the legal practice attend.

Tenure

The Professional Legal Training Placements are required to work at least two days per week for a minimum of 40 days. However, we are open to requests for flexible working arrangements.

All Practical Legal Training Placements will be required to work at the PIAC office at Level 5, 175 Liverpool St, Sydney.

This is an unpaid position.

Major Accountabilities

- Answer telephone enquiries from clients and potential clients;
- Assist with casework under the supervision of Solicitors, including taking instructions, drafting correspondence, preparing documentation, undertaking legal research and assisting in court;
- Conduct research to assist staff with casework and policy projects, including Towards Truth.

Selection Criteria

- Good telephone manner and an ability to deal effectively with people at all levels;
- Sound time-management and organisational skills;
- Legal research skills;
- Understanding of legislative and law reform processes;
- Writing skills to enable drafting of research reports and legal documents;
- Demonstrated understanding of the issues facing socially and economically disadvantaged people and of public interest concepts;
- Demonstrated ability to work co-operatively as part of a team.

Applications

PIAC strongly encourages applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people living with a disability.

Your application should be no longer than five pages. An application should comprise:

- A cover letter addressing the selection criteria.
- A current CV.
- A copy of your academic transcript.

Applications should be sent by email to jobs@piac.asn.au

For further information about these opportunities please contact Mitchell Skipsey, Senior Solicitor – Strategic Litigation via jobs@piac.asn.au

The application closing date is 21 June 2024 and we anticipate placements will commence in July 2024