

## **Practical Legal Training Student Role and Responsibilities**

### **About Legal Aid NSW**

Legal Aid NSW is the largest legal aid agency in Australia, comprising a Central Sydney office and 23 regional offices in metropolitan and regional centres across NSW and a number of specialist services and advice clinics. It was established under the Legal Aid Commission Act 1979 as an independent authority to assist economically and socially disadvantaged people to understand and protect their rights in the legal system. People with disabilities, from people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women and children, Indigenous people and people with mental illness are some of the groups who may experience difficulties when enforcing and defending their rights.

Working in partnership with private lawyers, Legal Aid NSW provides legal advice, information and minor assistance and legal representation to eligible people in many areas of law. Legal Aid NSW also provides alternative dispute resolution services, community legal education programs, and publications on legal issues.

### **Purpose of the PLT student position**

Completion of Practical Legal Training (PLT) is an essential requirement in order to practice law in NSW. Most PLT courses comprise of academic course work together with a practical work experience component. The purpose of the position is to provide opportunities for law students and recent law graduates to:

- undertake professional learning
- gain work experience in a legal practice in a social justice environment
- complete the practical component of a PLT course.

### **Key responsibilities**

A PLT student will:

- assist legal officers in conducting an effective legal practice
- undertake file work and legal research
- work collaboratively with practice staff (legal officers and administrative staff)
- comply with the Legal Aid Commission Act, policies and practice management standards and undertake all related administrative and case management activities.

### **Key accountabilities**

Undertake tasks under the supervision of legal officers including:

- preparation of documents and legal research

- assist legal officers with tasks associated with the provision of advice, minor assistance, case work, outreach and community legal education
- liaise with and communicate information to clients and other stakeholders, including the private profession, counsel and third parties
- assist legal officers and legal support staff to provide an efficient and effective legal service to clients in accordance with legislation and directions, policy, guidelines and practice standards
- effectively use Legal Aid NSW electronic case management/tracking systems and databases
- under the supervision of legal officers, work with relevant stakeholders and service delivery partners including other government and NSW government law and justice agencies.

## **Communication**

**Internal** - PLT students work closely with solicitors and legal support staff on matters affecting clients. The PLT student reports to a senior solicitor.

**External** – PLT students communicate with clients and other government and non-government agencies including the Courts, private practitioners, welfare agencies, health, drug and alcohol and mental health agencies.

## **Key challenges**

- Working closely with solicitors to ensure the provision of quality services to clients.
- Being able to communicate with a wide range of people, including people from ATSI communities, those who may be distressed, have physical or intellectual disabilities, come from non-English speaking backgrounds, or have problem behaviours such as drug or alcohol addictions.
- Adapting to new systems and technology which have a significant impact on legal practice.

## **Knowledge and skills**

- Knowledge of legal systems and processes.
- Knowledge of issues relating to delivery of legal services to socially and economically disadvantaged people (including people from ATSI communities, those who may be distressed, have physical or intellectual disabilities, come from non-English speaking backgrounds, or have problem behaviours such as drug or alcohol addictions).
- Knowledge of, or capacity to quickly acquire knowledge of relevant court procedures and Legal Aid Commission policies and procedures.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to prepare letters, draft submissions and other documents.
- Sound legal research and analytical skills.
- High level administrative and computer skills.

- Ability to work in a small team, to take initiative and to problem solve.
- Ability to meet deadlines, and to manage a diverse workload.
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Capacity to identify and understand legal and cross cultural issues facing socially and economically disadvantaged people.