



**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
STATE SOLICITOR'S OFFICE
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANTS

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

October 2020

Professional Assistant Role

These positions will provide applicants with a unique opportunity to work closely with the most senior legal officers within government, by providing legal research assistance to the Solicitor General, State Solicitor, State Counsel and Deputy State Solicitor (Advice, Policy and Public Law).

Assigned tasks may include:

- Drafting research memos concerning discrete legal issues;
- Writing or proof reading legal advices;
- Litigation tasks including drafting submissions, discovery and summarising opponent's submissions;
- Assisting with law reform papers and submissions to Ministers and public bodies;
- Attending Court;
- Attending meetings and conferences with clients and stakeholders.

The work is interesting, diverse and challenging and will provide an excellent basis for a successful career in law.

Successful applicants will have a demonstrated interest in working at the State Solicitor's Office, and display developed research, analytical, problem solving and interpersonal skills. They must be self-motivated, and able to work autonomously as required.

These applicants will be placed in a pool from which fixed term, full time appointments may be made, with the first appointments from this pool expected to commence in January 2021 on a two year contract.

It is anticipated that, following completion of their contract Professional Assistants will apply for graduate employment with the State Solicitor's Office.

Notable past Professional Assistants include:

- Hon Peter Quinlan SC – Chief Justice of Western Australia
- Hon Jennifer Smith – Justice of the Supreme Court
- Hon Janine Prichard – Justice of the Supreme Court
- Hon Robert Mitchell – Justice of the Supreme Court
- Hon Christine Wheeler AO QC – Former Justice of the Supreme Court
- Ms Linda Bush – Former Registrar of the Supreme Court

Professional Assistants from 1992 onwards also continue to be employed in senior roles with the State Solicitor's Office.

Eligibility

Applications will be accepted from:

1. Penultimate year law students.

These applicants must be prepared to complete their final year of study part time over the two year period.

2. Final year law students.

3. Legal graduates.

Please note that this recruitment process is open to law students and law graduates only. While we will accept applications from recent graduates who have been admitted to practice law; those who have begun their career in law (as a Law Graduate) or those who have practised as a lawyer will not be eligible to apply. This ineligibility includes overseas qualified and practicing lawyers who have completed an Australian law degree for admission in Western Australia.

State Solicitor's Office Overview

The State Solicitor's Office (formerly the Crown Solicitor's Office) is the largest and longest standing legal office in Perth having been established 1838.

Today the Office is highly regarded as a leading legal service provider offering a broad range of legal services to the West Australian State Government and Ministers, and to over 120 client departments, instrumentalities and statutory corporations.

Under the leadership of the State Solicitor, the Office:

- Provides legal advice.
- Conducts litigation.
- Conducts government commercial and conveyancing matters.
- Provides representation as counsel in courts and tribunals.
- Prepares legal documents.

The State Solicitor's Office also advises the Attorney General on legal matters, including those relating to law reform.

Centrally located in the Perth CBD, the State Solicitor's Office has a staff contingent of approximately 258, including 174 lawyers and over 84 administrative, research, paralegal and support staff.

About the Position

The State Solicitor's Office currently employs three Professional Assistants, to work with the State Solicitor, State Counsel and Deputy State Solicitor (Advice, Policy and Public Law). The successful applicants may be assigned to one of these practitioners for the full two year period, or rotate to work with a number of these practitioners.

The State Solicitor is responsible for providing, at the highest level, a legal service to the Attorney General and other Ministers of the State on a broad range of matters relating to the State and its instrumentalities. This includes effective and efficient running of the Office resulting in the delivery of professional, competent and cost-effective legal services to Government.

The State Counsel is responsible for advising Government and appearing as Senior Counsel in all Supreme Court jurisdictions (including the High Court of Australia) in the most complex and sensitive matters.

The Deputy State Solicitor is responsible for providing high level legal advice on matters involving the State and its instrumentalities.

Solicitor General's Chambers Overview

The Solicitor General is the principal legal adviser to the Attorney General and, through the Attorney General, to Government and its agencies. In addition, the Solicitor General appears in court as counsel for the State and, when requested by the Attorney General, for agencies of the State and other bodies.

The first law officer of the State is the Attorney General, which is a political position; the second law officer of the State is the Solicitor General which is an independent position. There is an interconnection between the two roles, and the Attorney General can delegate functions to the Solicitor General.

The office is an independent, statutory office created by the *Solicitor General Act of 1969*. Centrally located in the Perth CBD, the Solicitor General's Chambers consists of the Solicitor General, the Professional Assistant and an Office Administrator.

About the Position

The Solicitor General employs one Professional Assistant to work with them for the full two year period.

There is a high degree of court work involved in this position, including work in the High Court and Western Australian courts and tribunals, and it offers the successful applicant an opportunity to gain a depth of experience in constitutional litigation. The successful applicant will also be required to travel with the Solicitor General for High Court matters and Standing Committee of Solicitors General meetings.

Employment Conditions

Remuneration Package

Professional Assistants will receive remuneration at Level 3 PSGOGA, \$71,896 per annum (as at 13 June 2020) plus super.

Leave, Allowances and other Employee Entitlements

Attractive leave and other benefits are available to the successful applicant. These benefits include four weeks annual leave per annum and generous personal leave and other benefits analogous to WA public sector conditions as prescribed under the WA *Public Service Award 1992* and the *Public Service and Government Officers CSA General Agreement 2017*.

The Award and Agreement can be accessed via the WA Industrial Relations Commission website at <http://www.wairc.wa.gov.au/index.php/en/awards-agreements>.

Salary Packaging

Some salary packaging arrangements may be entered into by the successful applicant in accordance with prevailing WA Government policy.

Residency Requirements

To be eligible for appointment, applicants must be Australian citizens or have permanent residency status.

Criminal Record Screening

Appointment to this, and all positions in the State Solicitor's Office, is subject to formal criminal records screening conducted by the Department of Justice. Strict safeguards and confidentiality arrangements are in place to protect the rights of all individuals screened.

Applications

Confidentiality

All applications will be treated in strictest confidence.

The Application

Applications must be submitted in writing. The selection panel will use the written application to assist in the assessment of your skills and abilities against the work related requirements. Your application will need to demonstrate previous experience, skills, knowledge and qualifications relevant to all of the job requirements.

The application should consist of the following:

1. A cover letter of no more than three (3) pages discussing why you want to undertake a graduate position at the State Solicitor's Office. This should cover your:
 - a. Demonstrated interest in the law and conventions relating to State government, its departments and instrumentalities;
 - b. Proven ability to undertake legal research; and
 - c. Proven ability to work autonomously and build productive relationships.
2. A current comprehensive CV including the contact details of two referees;
3. A copy of your most current academic transcript.

There is no need to nominate which position you are interested in, as all suitable applicants will be placed into the same pool. The State Solicitor's Office and the Solicitor General will then determine which applicants will be selected for all available roles.

All capabilities as listed in the 'Level 3 Capability Profile' will be assessed at some stage of the selection process, along with the following role specific criteria:

- *Significant progress towards the completion of a Bachelor of Laws (or equivalent) degree;*
- *Academic and intellectual ability;*
- *Proven ability to undertake legal research; and*
- *Demonstrated interest in the law and conventions relating to State government, its departments and instrumentalities.*

How to submit your application

Online

The department's preferred option is for job applications to be lodged online through the 'current vacancies' section at www.jobs.wa.gov.au . You will receive an electronic receipt confirming your application has been submitted.

Late Applications

Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure that the application is received by Department of the Justice's Human Resource branch before the nominated closing time.

Unfortunately late applications cannot be considered.

Further Information

For any information on the job requirements, the recruitment process or any employment factors please contact:

Jenette Schoch
Workforce Coordinator
(08) 9264 1005
ssohr@sso.wa.gov.au

All requests for information will be dealt with in confidence.