



Job Description Form

Principal Legal Officer

Office of the Public Advocate

Position details

Classification Level: Specified Calling Level 6

Award/Agreement: Public Service Award 1992 / Public Service CSA Agreement 2024 (and subsequent agreement/s)

Position Status: Permanent

Organisation Unit: Office of the Public Advocate

Physical Location: Perth CBD

Reporting relationships

Responsible to: 3524 – Public Advocate

This position: 023331 – Principal Legal Officer – Specified Calling L6

Direct reports: 023332 – Senior Legal Officer – Specified Calling L4
023333 – Paralegal – Level 3
023334 – Legal Assistant – Level 2

Overview of the position

The Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) promotes and protects the rights of adults with decision-making disabilities to reduce their risk of neglect, exploitation and abuse through the provision of its statutory services in accordance with the functions of the Public Advocate under *Guardianship and Administration Act 1990* through community education, advocacy and investigation, and guardianship services.

The Principal Legal Officer is responsible for providing strategic level advice and leadership to OPA and overseeing in-house legal services to ensure statutory compliance and the effective resolution of legal matters. This role supports OPA's broader remit of advocacy, and investigation, guardianship, and community and professional education.

Job description

As part of the Office of Public Advocate, the Principal Legal Officer will be expected to:

- Operate within the Department's Corporate Governance Framework, policies and procedures and ensure effective transparency and accountability of all Department activity.
- Operate within the chain of command to coordinate activities required to meet the Department's strategic objectives.
- Work collaboratively to achieve common goals and best practice and facilitate business improvements as appropriate.
- Work to improve communication and model integrity and respect in all interactions.
- Work to facilitate cultural and management reforms within OPA through leadership and engagement.
- Represent OPA's interest as required.

Role specific responsibilities

Provide Strategic Legal Advice and Representation

- As a member of the OPA's Leadership Team, contribute to OPA's strategic and business planning processes including the development and implementation of broader strategies and planning initiatives.
- Provide expert legal advice and guidance to service delivery teams on complex legal issues, including Guardianship and Administration matters, and intersecting Commonwealth and State legislation (including legislation associated with NDIS and Aged Care).
- Conducting legal proceedings or allocating representation for the Public Advocate to conduct legal proceedings in court and tribunal matters.
- Provide reports, advice and undertake actions that contribute to the review and development of legislation, including preparation of drafting instructions for amendment of regulations and legislation.
- Undertake legal research and draft a wide range of legal documents including complex and sensitive cases and court and tribunal documents spanning the control of the OPA's legal service.
- Advocate, mediate, oversight and conduct negotiations on complex legal matters, management of disputes, litigation and insurance claims as delegated by the Public Advocate.
- Review and approve applications and legal documents, including those related to any related court and tribunal matter such as restraining orders and critical case-based decisions.
- Monitor legal performance and ensure compliance with statutory and procedural standards across OPA operations.

- Act as the primary liaison regarding OPA's legal services with the State Solicitor's Office (SSO), Public Trustee and other legal stakeholders, ensuring effective resolution of escalated legal matters.
- Oversight on the delivery of outsourced legal services from external providers including engagement, role purpose, preparation of briefs, management of timeframes, and fee negotiation.
- Maintain expert awareness of relevant trends and legal matters pertaining to the OPA's responsibilities.

Lead and Develop the Legal Team and Train OPA staff

- Lead and manage the legal team including the allocation of work; provision of support, feedback and supervision to the legal team; and incorporating feedback into the team's professional practice.
- Identify and pursue professional development opportunities for the position holder and team.
- Lead and mentor OPA's in-house legal team providing professional development to the in-house legal team to improve skills, knowledge, and performance.
- Develop and deliver training to OPA staff on key legislative frameworks as relevant, particularly in relation to NDIS, aged care, child protection, mental health legislation, and the *Guardianship and Administration Act 1990*.
- Contribute to the development and implementation of OPA's policies, operational strategies, and systems to enhance service delivery.

Stakeholder Relationships

- Forms partnerships with stakeholders across the Department to ensure an informed, timely and, where appropriate, proactive legal service is provided, seeking to comprehensively understand the business, service delivery functions and potential risks.
- Conducts high level liaison with stakeholders on legal matters and seeks guidance from the Public Advocate in preparation for more contentious issues.
- Assists stakeholders with the interpretation of legal advice relevant to the Public Advocate's authority and OPA service delivery functions.

Represent OPA in External Engagements

- Represent OPA in high-level forums where required, ministerial consultations, and external stakeholder engagements.

Work Health and Safety Responsibilities

- Take reasonable care for your own health, safety and wellbeing at work, and that of others who may be affected by your actions or omissions; and comply and cooperate with safety and health policies, procedures and applicable legislated requirements.
- Ensure, as far as practicable, the health, safety and wellbeing of OPA legal team staff through the provision of a safe workplace in accordance with health and safety legislation.

Corporate Responsibilities

- Demonstrate a commitment to adhere to the Department's Code of Conduct, Public Sector Commission's Ethical Foundations and Equal Employment Opportunity legislation
- Demonstrates the expected behaviours of the context for this role
- Other duties as required in accordance with strategic objectives, business plans, local workload priorities and performance management plans.

Job related requirements

In the context of the roles specific responsibilities, the ability to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and experience.

Shapes and Manages Strategy

The ability to develop strategic direction aligned with the organisation's role within government and society and create a shared sense of purpose by drawing on information and alternative viewpoints and demonstrating how the strategy contributes to higher level goals.

Achieve Results

This role requires the ability to build organisational skill and responsiveness by implementing continuous improvement initiatives, developing teams with complementary skills, integrating professional expertise and proactively managing risk.

Builds Productive Relationships

The capacity to build and sustain relationships at senior levels in the public service and to foster collaborative behaviour as well as to encourage and motivate team members to motivate performance and maintain morale.

Exemplifies Personal Integrity and Self-Awareness

This role requires a high level of self-awareness and resilience when faced with challenges, being open to feedback and have a personal commitment to professionalism, probity and personal development.

Communicates and Influences Effectively

A demonstrated ability to negotiate persuasively and to successfully listen, understand and adapt to a range of audiences is a requirement for this role.

Role Specific Criteria

Eligibility

A lawyer performing this position is deemed to be a government legal practitioner as defined in the *Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2022* (WA) and therefore the occupant is required to hold, or be eligible to hold, a current Australian practising certificate issued by the Legal Practice Board of Western Australia.

Qualifications

Bachelor of Laws Degree AND admission as a practitioner, however described, of the Supreme Court of Western Australia OR a legal practitioner from outside Western Australia whose qualifications for admission in Western Australia have been approved by the Legal Practice Board of Western Australia.

Experience

Extensive experience in providing legal advice on complex matters or autonomously conducting legal proceedings.

Experience managing legal teams and providing strategic direction in a service delivery or statutory environment.

Knowledge

Substantial knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation, standards, codes and guidelines.

Ability

High level communication, interpersonal and negotiation skills to engage and influence stakeholders, provide advice and draft legal documents.

Special requirements/equipment

The position holder may be required to travel within Western Australia and/or interstate for operational purposes.

This position is classified Specified Calling as per Clause 12 of the Public Service Award 1992 and the Government Officer's Salaries Allowances and Conditions Award 1989.

Certification

The details contained in this document are an accurate statement of the duties, responsibilities and other requirements of the job.

Public Advocate

Signature: _____	Date: <u>18 August 2025</u>
HR certification date: <u>August 2025</u>	