Senior Legal Counsel

HEP Level 10

POSITION NUMBER	Insert 000000
ORGANISATIONAL UNIT	Office of the General Counsel
POSITION REPORTS TO	General Counsel
OVERALL PURPOSE	The overall purpose of the Senior Legal Counsel is to provide high-quality, strategic and practical legal advice across the University's functions and activities. As a senior lawyer, the role will lead complex legal matters, support key initiatives and manage legal, regulatory and reputational risk, with a particular focus on employment and industrial relations matters. Working within the Office of the General Counsel (**OGC**), the University's in-house legal team, the Senior Legal Counsel will advise on a broad range of matters, including employment and industrial relations matter, enterprise agreement-related work, disputes and litigation, regulatory and compliance issues, governance, privacy, freedom of information, student matters, and contracts work. The Senior Legal Counsel also mentors colleagues within the OGC, building capability and supporting the professional growth of junior lawyers across a broad range of legal matters.
ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT AND RELATIONSHIPS	**Within the University the position:** ◆ works closely with operational areas across the University, including senior leaders and managers; ◆ works collaboratively with other members of the Office of the General Counsel to allocate, prioritise and deliver legal work; and ◆ supervises the junior lawyers within OGC where required. **Outside the University the position liaises with**: ◆ external counterparties, law firms and counsel, courts, tribunals, regulators and government bodies where required; ◆ investigators and other specialist advisers, unions and employee representatives, professional bodies and associations, sector stakeholders and other universities where required.
LOCATION/CAMPUS	The position is currently located at the Footscray Park Campus of the University. The position and incumbent may be relocated to any other existing or future University work locations where it conducts its operations.

KEY CAPABILITIES

Victoria University is committed to building core capability across VU through investment in our staff, our systems and our processes. We will develop the capabilities of our staff to:

Deliver – Excellence Results-driven, accountability, problem solving focus.

Engage – Customer service mind-set internally, externally and particularly for students.

Collaborate and Partner – Build successful relationships, communicate effectively, influence and negotiate.

Innovate – Entrepreneurship, growth, continuous improvement, digital transformation.

Lead – Inspire direction, lead change, manage and develop people.

OUR ORGANISATION

Victoria University (**VU**) is a dual sector (higher education and TAFE) tertiary institution based in Melbourne, Australia. VU has academic colleges, each covering a broad discipline of study, and several research institutes and research centres. The University has campuses in Melbourne's CBD and western region, and a campus in Sydney and Brisbane. It also offers courses at partner institutions throughout Asia. Over 40,000 students, including around 14,000 international students, study VU courses worldwide. In 2016, VU celebrated its 25th anniversary as a university, which also marked its 100 years as an educational institution.

Commitment to Protecting Country

Victoria University honours its deep diversity as a foundation for collaboration and social progress. We will demonstrate sensitivity in respecting First Nation perspectives. We will ensure that we respect our Indigenous voices and commit to sustainable Protecting Country. We will take leadership responsibility, in all that we do, to improve the health and wellbeing of our local and global communities, and the planet that we share.

Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion at VU

Victoria University believes that diversity of the workforce adds value to the University and creates a stronger, richer working environment for everyone. We are committed to making reasonable adjustments to ensure that our employees have positive, barrier-free work environments that accommodate their access needs. Employees who require adjustments are encouraged to discuss their needs with their line manager.

The University is a Child Safe organisation. The incumbent in this role will be required to hold a current Working with Children Check (WWCC).

ORGANISATIONAL UNIT

The Office of the General Counsel (**OGC**) is the University's central legal team within the Office of the Vice-Chancellor. It provides comprehensive, timely and high-quality legal advice and services to internal stakeholders, including senior leaders, on legal issues and matters arising out of the University's key functions and activities. The OGC partners with internal businesses and colleagues to ensure the University's legal needs are met, and existing and emerging legal risks are identified and managed.

The work of the OGC is diverse, interesting and challenging, with lawyers having an opportunity to work across all areas of the University and on various types of legal matters. The OGC has a collegiate and supportive culture that encourages and values diversity, flexibility, and wellbeing. It also supports and encourages systems improvement and the adoption of modern legal services to support internal stakeholders.

Some of the key services and work of the OGC include:

- reviewing, drafting and negotiating contracts, terms & conditions and research -related agreements, including those involving government and industry funded research, multi-party collaborative research agreements, sub-contracting arrangements, multi-institutional agreements, and IP licensing;
- managing litigation, including briefing external legal advisers and counsel, attending conferences and hearings where necessary, and advising on dispute resolution options;
- providing legal advice on issues arising out of the University's key functions, including in relation to intellectual property, licensing, regulatory risks, compliance issues, discrimination, employment, freedom of information, privacy, property, and student matters;
- monitoring regulatory and legal changes or reforms to the tertiary sector;
- delivering training on legal risks and issues to VU business units;
- working closely with key stakeholders to identify and manage key legal risks; and
- identifying opportunities for system improvements.

MAJOR TASKS AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

- Act as a senior legal advisor to the University, applying a comprehensive understanding of the University's strategic objectives, operations, risk settings and business needs.
- Lead and manage routine and complex legal matters across the University, including in relation to contracts, employment and industrial relations, disputes and litigation, regulatory and compliance issues, governance, privacy, freedom of information, and student matters.
- Build and sustain strong relationships with internal and external stakeholders, including senior leaders, managers, People and Culture teams, operational areas, external law firms and specialist advisers, regulators, unions and employee representatives.
- Provide leadership within the OGC, mentoring lawyers and staff, settling the work of junior lawyers, and identifying opportunities for professional development and training across the OGC's areas of practice.
- Monitor legal and regulatory developments relevant to the University, with particular attention to employment and industrial relations reform, advise on operational implications, and recommend and support updates to policies, procedures, agreements and precedents.
- Drive and support OGC initiatives and projects, including developing precedents, delivering training, and integrating technology to enhance legal service delivery.
- Collaborate as an internal member of the OGC fostering a positive work culture that supports wellbeing and contributes to a high-performing, adaptable team that meets the University's diverse legal needs.
- Identify, assess, prioritise and control risks to the health and safety of staff, students, visitors and contractors to the environment arising from the operation of the area under their responsibility, and ensure that a safe system of work is developed and followed through appropriate training, supervision and monitoring in line with the annual occupational health and safety plan.

TYPICAL/MAJOR CHALLENGES

- Ensuring legal advice and decision-making consistently align with the University's strategic priorities, while managing legal, reputational, and regulatory risks in a complex and dynamic sector.
- Exercising a high level of judgment and independent decision-making across urgent, sensitive and high-risk matters, including disputes, complaints, investigations, psychosocial hazards and gender-based violence matters.
- Clearly communicating complex legal, financial and reputational risks to senior leaders, managers and relevant operational areas to support timely, defensible and practical decisions.
- Balancing high-volume day-to-day legal work across the University with complex and strategic matters, including disputes.
- Collaborating with a broad and diverse range of stakeholders, including senior leaders, managers, operational areas, People and Culture, staff, unions and employee representatives, regulators, investigators and external advisers, each with varying priorities, timelines and levels of legal understanding.
- Monitoring legal and regulatory change across key areas and ensuring timely integration into advice, policies, procedures, agreements and operational practice, with particular attention to employment law and industrial relations reform.

LEVEL OF SUPERVISION

- Operates under the broad direction from the General Counsel and may be required to manage other administrative, technical or professional staff.

PROFESSIONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

- Extensive knowledge of and experience across a broad range of legal disciplines, including in relation to one or more of the following matters in an in-house setting and/or private practice: commercial, regulatory, dispute, governance and risk matters.
- Understanding of legislation, regulatory frameworks and policy settings relevant to complex organisations and the tertiary education sector.
- High standards of professionalism, integrity, and ethical behaviour.
- Expertise in identifying, managing, and mitigating legal risks and liabilities in a complex environment.
- Knowledge of or experience in leadership principles, including mentoring, training, and fostering a collaborative environment within a legal team.
- In-depth understanding of the importance of an organisation's strategy, vision, and operational structures and the role of an in-house legal team in supporting the organisation.

KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

Essential:

1. Knowledge or training equivalent to proven expertise in the management of significant human and material resources.
2. A current E (Employee) Working with Children Check.
3. Demonstrated understanding of appropriate behaviours when dealing with young people regardless of their background or diversity of need.
4. A tertiary qualification in law and an Australian legal practitioner with a current Victorian legal practising certificate (unrestricted) with at least six years' post-admission experience in an in-house setting or in private practice.
5. Extensive experience providing strategic and practical advice across a broad range of legal matters, including complex commercial, regulatory, dispute, governance and risk matters.
6. Excellent ability to work autonomously and independently, as well as collaborate with team members, escalate matters where necessary, and contribute to a culture of continuous improvement.
7. Exceptional interpersonal and communication skills, including the ability to interact effectively with a broad range of stakeholders, both internal and external, and interact with and influence senior leaders.
8. Outstanding time management and organisational skills, with demonstrated ability to prioritise and manage multiple legal matters at the same time, complete work in a timely manner, and maintain up-to-date files.
9. Demonstrated leadership and delegation skills, including the ability to mentor staff, and identifying opportunities for professional development and training.
10. Ability to provide sound, timely, cost-effective and commercially pragmatic legal advice and support.
11. Demonstrated willingness and ability to contribute to a high-performing team that values wellbeing, fosters collaboration, and supports personal and professional development and growth.
12. Demonstrated capacity to understand and comply with employer policy and practices in all aspects of work and conduct, including occupational health and safety and anti-discrimination responsibilities and complete and attend relevant training.
13. Willingness to commit to the University's values and behaviours:
    - Values – Access, Excellence, Respect
    - Behaviours – Engagement, Collegiality, Courage.

Desirable:

1. Experience in employment and industrial relations law, including day-to-day advice, enterprise agreement drafting and interpretation, bargaining and negotiations support, workplace complaints and investigations, disputes, psychosocial hazards, gender-based violence and employment law reform.

2. An understanding and knowledge of the higher education and TAFE sectors, including relevant regulatory frameworks, university legislation, industrial instruments, policies and procedures.

Pre-Employment Requirement:

- Evidence of eligibility to work in Australia including evidence that any required immigration visas have been obtained.
- All VU Employees must provide responses to the University's Gender Base Violence Pre-screening Questionnaire.

P&C Use Only:

Date Updated	00/00/0000	**Date Classified**	00/00/0000