



Environmental Defenders Office

Special Counsel – Position Description

EDO relies on our people to use their skills and experience to provide the best possible support to our clients and other staff. While this job description aims to outline the fundamental reason the role exists, the role may evolve as EDO evolves.

If you see a way to play to your strengths in a way that achieves EDO outcomes, please don't be limited to this list. We have important work to do and need everyone to be operating at their best.

Job title: Special Counsel NSW

Reporting to: Managing Lawyer

Purpose of the position

Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) is the largest environmental legal centre in the Australia-Pacific, dedicated to protecting our climate, communities and shared environment by providing access to justice, running ground-breaking litigation and leading law reform advocacy.

The Special Counsel will engage with legal issues surrounding climate change and environmental protection in Australia.

Key responsibilities & duties

- Provide legal advice, representation and education to EDO communities on a broad range of public interest environmental law issues and disputes.
- Engage in litigation, policy and law reform, and outreach to achieve EDO's strategic outcomes.
- Comply with EDO's policies and procedures, and legal obligations.
- Take responsibility for file management including ensuring administrative processes are performed accurately and in a timely manner.
- Participate in practice management strategies under the supervision of their manager such as professional file management, participating in casework meetings, updating casework records, participating in peer review processes such as crosschecking solicitor advice and reviewing correspondence.
- Deliver legal services in a culturally competent manner and work with clients from a wide variety of backgrounds.
- Supervise the work of volunteers who undertake tasks such as legal research, document preparation, etc.
- Mentor and contribute to the performance of junior legal staff and act as solicitor on the record in court cases when required.

Duties

- Provide legal advice and representation to the public on a wide range of legal matters relevant to the environment.
- Undertake public education and outreach, including assisting in developing online

resources and fact sheets, and the conduct of workshops or seminars with a focus on outreach for vulnerable communities.

- Engage in law reform related to environmental law and policy, including participating in government policy processes and by developing and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders.
- Comply with professional obligations.
- Participate in and support EDO fundraising.
- Other reasonable requests made by the Managing Lawyer or Legal Director.
- Special Counsel: Have carriage of litigation undertaken in the relevant jurisdiction.

General

All staff have a responsibility to:

- Develop and maintain a good knowledge of EDO's role and policies.
- Represent EDO in a positive and effective manner by actively demonstrating EDO Values.
- Attend and contribute actively and constructively at staff meetings.
- Maintain appropriate records, assist with office administration, such as files, computer and precedent systems.
- Seek opportunities for personal and professional development, particularly related to the team and position's specific areas of responsibility.
- Respond to requests by clients and fellow staff in a knowledgeable, professional, constructive and respectful manner.
- Provide accurate and timely data and information for reporting, fundraising and communications purposes.
- Work closely with the Managing Lawyer to develop and implement planning for each program, and work with a higher level of autonomy and self-direction. This may include leading on media work, seminars, publications, as well as having carriage of litigation, law reform and advice work.

Qualifications

- Law degree and extensive post-admission experience in legal practice.
- Acknowledged technical experience in the legislative frameworks applicable to the role, and capacity to lead and supervise litigation, law reform and policy, community legal education/early intervention.
- Practice management experience and eligibility for a Principal Practising Certificate within the relevant jurisdiction/s.
- Proven experience in a leadership role within a legal setting.
- Proven experience in a leadership role within a not-for-profit.
- Proven experience in a leadership role within a geographically dispersed team.
- Demonstrated ability to develop and implement strategic objectives within a legal practice.

Professional competencies and behaviours

- **Good leadership qualities with the ability to inspire and develop high-performing teams.**
Motivation: Regularly recognises and rewards team achievements, fostering a culture of appreciation and motivation.
Empowerment: Effectively delegates tasks, empowering team members to take ownership and

responsibility for their work. Encourages team members to take initiative and lead projects or segments of work as appropriate.

- **Excellent organisational, communication and interpersonal skills.**

Clarity and precision: Communicates complex legal and strategic information clearly and concisely, ensuring all stakeholders understand the key messages.

Active listening: Practices active listening to understand the perspectives and needs of team members and stakeholders.

Self-awareness: Regularly seeks feedback on their own performance from across the organisation and demonstrates awareness of personal limitations and knowledge gaps. Actively seeks to improve and is open to learning from others, regardless of their role or level within EDO.

- **High level of integrity and professional ethics.**

Ethical decision making: Makes decisions that align with the organisation's values and ethical standards, even when facing pressure or adversity.

Transparency: Maintains transparency, fostering trust and credibility.

Accountability: Takes responsibility for actions and encourages the same level of accountability from members of their team.

- **Ability to drive innovation and adapt to changing legal environments.**

Curiosity and open-mindedness: Stays informed about emerging trends and developments in their field of expertise.

Flexibility: Able to adapt quickly to changes in the environment and is comfortable with ambiguity.

- **Inclusivity and ability to work closely with a diverse range of internal and external stakeholders.**

Inclusive: Committed to fostering an inclusive and diverse workplace, through active promotion of equity, thorough understanding of diversity and leadership of initiatives that ensure all employees feel valued and respected.

Ensuring varied perspectives: Involves team members in decision-making, ensuring diverse perspectives are considered.

Open and honest: facilitates open and honest discussions among team members.

Cultural competence: Shows respect for, and understanding for, diverse cultures, backgrounds and viewpoints.

Commitment to EDO's Values:

EDO is in the process of developing a framework which incorporates all of the values and behaviours we expect to see at EDO, to provide the foundations for the culture we want to have. Once finalised, the EDO will be guided by that document – known as 'the EDO way'.

Commitment

- We are committed to; a united organisation, to each other, to collaboration, to justice, to our communities and to creating a world where nature thrives.
- We are committed to providing excellent legal services and resources, informed by the best available science, in order to empower clients and communities.
- We are committed to improving our planet and society.
- We care for EDO's clients and stakeholders.
- We are fearless in the face of adversity, and care for each other as we face this adversity.

Diversity

- We are respectful of and welcome diversity of staff, volunteers, offices, environmental regions, communities, stakeholders.
- We respect First Nations Peoples' knowledge and experience, and work with them to protect their country and culture.
- We acknowledge that the law has not always been just.
- We dedicate ourselves to understanding the diversity of our people and culture.
- We welcome and respect our own differences and learn from them and collaborate to achieve our greatest potential.
- We are great lawyers and great people, with open hearts and open minds.
- We respect the different places our stakeholders come from and strive to help them, even if their worldviews don't align completely with ours.

Integrity

- We work effectively, efficiently, strategically, professionally and ethically; "justice is in our nature".
- We are truthful with ourselves and others.
- We are nonpartisan and inspire trust in our clients, stakeholders and government.
- We respect the world's resources and make maximum productive use of the resources entrusted to us.

Vision

- We lead change and environmental empowerment using innovation, creativity, and courage.
- We expand the boundaries with creativity and skill, pioneering new legal pathways to a healthier, safer world and inspiring others.
- We are inquisitive, curious and persistent: exploring new ideas and embracing change.
- We boldly challenge the status quo while providing solutions to our most pressing challenges.