



Position Title:	Chief Legal Officer	Position No:	L25
Group:	Land and Law	Service Area:	Legal Services
Reports to:	GM Land and Law (GM02)	Direct Reports:	(L14) LPM Native Title, (L40) LPM Energy & Resources, (L02) LPM Regional Development
Classification Level	Management Tier 2 – Service Area		
Location:	Darwin	Date Approved:	February 2026
Special Measures:	<i>Not applicable</i>		

POSITION OVERVIEW

The Chief Legal Officer provides strategic leadership and authoritative legal advice to support the Northern Land Council’s statutory responsibilities under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, the Native Title Act 1993, and related legislative frameworks.

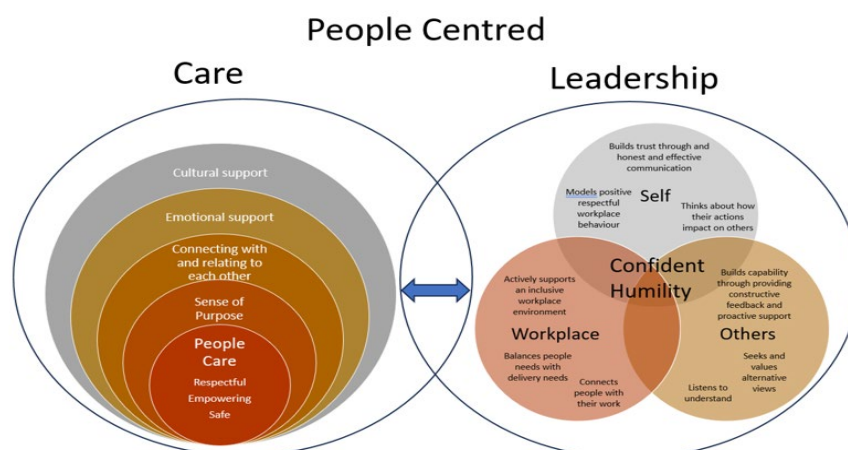
The role is accountable for the integrity, quality and strategic direction of the NLC’s legal practice, ensuring that legal advice, oversight of litigation strategy, agreement-making and governance arrangements support culturally legitimate decision-making by Traditional Owners and the effective delivery of the NLC’s representative functions.

As the organisation’s senior legal advisor, the Chief Legal Officer provides expert counsel to the CEO, Chair, and Executive Council, manages legal risk at an enterprise level, and strengthens the capability and consistency of legal services across the various Legal Practices within the Service Area.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

LEADERSHIP

- Lead by example in advancing the NLC’s representative role, advocacy priorities and statutory functions, modelling professional integrity, sound judgement and culturally safe legal practice.
- Provide strategic leadership across the Legal Service Area, setting direction and expectations that promote accountability, ethical decision-making and professional excellence.
- Lead and manage direct reports, including Practice Managers and senior legal specialists, ensuring clarity of roles, strong supervision and performance accountability.
- Embed TO-centric practice and culturally safe leadership across the Service Area, supporting respectful engagement with Traditional Owners and culturally legitimate decision-making processes.
- Contribute to a positive organisational culture aligned with the NLC People Centred Care and Leadership Model.
- Build leadership capability within the Legal Service Area through mentoring, professional support and development of senior practitioners.
- Promote accountability, transparency and ethical decision-making.





STRATEGY AND PLANNING

- Translate organisational strategy and executive direction into Legal Service Area priorities, ensuring legal strategy supports the NLC's statutory functions, representative role and long-term organisational direction.
- Oversee development and implementation of Legal Service Area plans, ensuring alignment with emerging legal risks, strategic opportunities and the evolving operating environment of Land Councils and Native Title Representative Bodies.
- Identify and assess emerging legal, regulatory and policy issues affecting Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Land Trusts, Prescribed Bodies Corporate and the NLC's statutory responsibilities.
- Provide authoritative strategic legal advice to the CEO, General Managers and senior leadership on complex statutory interpretation, litigation risk, agreement-making and governance matters.
- Contribute to enterprise strategy through informed legal advice, including strategic litigation opportunities, negotiation positioning and responses to legislative or policy reform affecting Aboriginal land and sea rights.
- Influence organisation-wide practice, standards and policy development by providing legal leadership on governance integrity, decision-making processes, agreement frameworks and consultation requirements.
- Strengthen cross-disciplinary strategic alignment between Legal, Anthropology, Regional teams and technical functions to support legally robust consultation, evidence-based decision-making and effective agreement implementation.
- Monitor Legal Service Area performance against strategic outcomes and implement corrective action where required.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT / RELATIONSHIPS AND ADVOCACY

- Maintain and strengthen collaborative relationships with Traditional Owners in accordance with the TO-centric relationship model, providing legal support that enables informed, culturally legitimate and procedurally sound decision-making.
- Act as a trusted legal advisor to the CEO, Chair, Executive Council and senior leadership on complex and sensitive matters affecting the NLC's statutory responsibilities and organisational risk.
- Ensure Legal Service Area activities reflect constituent priorities and statutory responsibilities, supporting legally robust consultation, agreement-making and governance processes.
- Represent the organisation in engagement with government agencies, regulators, external legal representatives and other stakeholders on complex legal, policy and statutory matters.
- Advocate for the Legal Service Area's priorities in alignment with organisational strategy and executive direction, including strengthening legal risk awareness and governance integrity across the organisation.
- Provide legal leadership in managing complex, sensitive or high-risk matters, including disputes, negotiations and matters with potential reputational or statutory impact.
- Escalate enterprise-level legal or reputational risks to senior leadership as appropriate.

SERVICE DELIVERY

- Ensure integrated, compliant and performance-based delivery of Legal Service Area functions across all practice streams.
- Maintain legal practice governance, including setting professional supervision expectations and practice standards to ensure consistent, high-quality and legally sound advice across the organisation.
- Ensure compliance with statutory, legislative, contractual and funding obligations relevant to the NLC's legal responsibilities.
- Hold direct reports accountable for service performance, professional standards and effective supervision of legal matters.
- Monitor service delivery, operational and financial performance and implement corrective action where required.
- Oversee management of complex, sensitive or high-risk legal matters, including litigation, negotiations and agreement-making, ensuring appropriate allocation, supervision and risk mitigation.
- Provide oversight of external legal service providers and counsel engagement for complex or specialist matters.



- Support legally robust consultation and decision-making processes through collaboration with Anthropology, Regional teams and other Service Areas.
- Oversee accurate and timely internal and external legal reporting.
- Manage operational and strategic legal risks in alignment with the enterprise risk management framework.
- Oversee responses to internal or external audit, review or regulatory requirements affecting the Legal Service Area.
- Foster continuous improvement, innovation and professional practice development across the Legal Service Area.
- Lead implementation of approved organisational change initiatives affecting legal service delivery.
- Ensure business continuity and service resilience.

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

- The Chief Legal Officer is accountable for workforce performance, leadership capability and organisational culture across the Legal Service Area and operates within the Management Levels of Authority.
 - Leadership and performance management of direct reports, including Practice Managers and senior specialists.
 - Service Area workforce planning, capability development and succession planning.
 - Determining Service Area workforce structures within approved establishment.
 - Oversight of recruitment, appointment and establishment decisions within delegation.
 - Managing complex conduct and performance matters within delegation.
 - Implementing organisational people strategy and culturally safe practice across the Service Area.
 - Contribute to organisation-wide workforce planning relevant to portfolio scope.

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Lead by example in promoting a safe, healthy and culturally safe work environment.
- Maintain Service Area compliance with the NLC WHS Management System and legislative obligations.
- Ensure direct reports fulfil their WHS responsibilities.
- Monitor WHS performance and address systemic or emerging risks.
- Lead investigation and response to significant incidents within delegation.
- Escalate enterprise-level WHS risks appropriately.

DELEGATIONS & ACCOUNTABILITIES – INFORMATION SECTION

Financial Delegation - Band 4

- Approve operating expenditure within Service Area budget and delegation.
- Approve procurement and capital expenditure within delegation and approved budget.
- Monitor Service Area budget performance and financial risk.
- Contribute to organisational budget development and forecasting.
- Ensure compliance with Financial Authorisations Policy.

Governance Accountability

- Accountable for Service Area compliance with statutory, legislative, funding and policy requirements.
- Accountable for accurate reporting and maintenance of effective internal controls.
- Accountable for identification and management of Service Area strategic and operational risks.
- Escalate enterprise or systemic risks to the CEO or General Manager as appropriate.

Decision-Making Authority

- Exercise independent judgement within governance and delegation frameworks.
- Determine Service Area operational priorities and resource allocation within approved budget.
- Interpret and apply policy at Service Area level.
- Escalate matters beyond delegation or enterprise impact.



SERVICE AREA LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK

Accountability and Execution		
Capability	Manage complex and non-complex Service Area priorities at a using contemporary (proactive) and traditional (reactive) approaches to service delivery	
What this looks like	<i>Provide a strategic level of specialist, professional and/ or technical expertise to primarily internal stakeholders on potentially complex, sensitive and contentious matters. Drive a shared sense of purpose and accountability for outcomes across the Service Area.</i>	<i>Translate organisational strategy into operational goals, encouraging innovative thinking and collaborative problem-solving to support forward-looking decisions and effective outcomes. Ensure service delivery complies with relevant policies, regulations, and legislative requirements.</i>
Collaboration and Influence		
Capability	Establish and foster collaborative relationships with internal and external stakeholders	
What this looks like	<i>Builds and sustains relationships with a network of key people internally and externally, leveraging influence to guide and shape decisions. Recognises shared agendas and works toward mutually beneficial outcomes.</i>	<i>Gathers and investigates information from a variety of sources, and explores new ideas and different viewpoints; finding opportunities to share information towards collaborative decision making.</i>
Planning and Direction		
Capability	Assess and explore various opportunities and mitigate or resolve obstacles to accomplish department goals that sustainably support the organisational strategic objectives.	
What this looks like	<i>Considers the impacts of a wide range of issues, capitalises on the expertise and knowledge to anticipate, prioritise and develop business plans using integrated and risk-based methods.</i>	<i>Monitors ongoing service performance, responding to change and uncertainty in a positive and flexible manner, with an approach of continuous improvement.</i>
People-Centred Leadership		
Capability	Model, lead and foster a workforce with shared values, based on proactive wellbeing, inclusivity and safe work culture.	
What this looks like	<i>Lead a culture that that prioritises the well-being of a diverse workforce. Model and lead a high-performance while navigating cross-cultural dynamics, maintaining values, conduct and performance standards.</i>	<i>Acts professionally and impartially at all times and operates within the boundaries of organisational processes. Encourages continuous learning, gives timely praise and recognition and addresses conflict and performance issues to ensure fair, equitable and sustainable outcomes.</i>
Judgement and Discretion		
Capability	Lead and foster effective decision making, taking onto account organisational risk in accordance with established management and governance systems.	
What this looks like	<i>Undertakes objective, critical analysis and distils the core issues. Presents logical arguments and draws accurate conclusions. Anticipates and seeks to minimise risks. Breaks through problems and weighs up the options to identify solutions.</i>	<i>Exercise sound judgement and discretion in complex and sensitive situations, balancing competing priorities and making decisions that reflect the best interests of the organisation and its stakeholders.</i>

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life



POSITION REQUIREMENTS

ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

- Qualified legal practitioner admitted to practice in the Supreme Court of a State or Territory of Australia.
- Extensive post-admission legal experience, including senior-level experience advising on complex statutory, administrative, governance, property and commercial matters.
- Extensive experience in land rights, native title, agreement-making, litigation or negotiations relevant to Aboriginal land, sea and resource interests.
- Experience providing strategic legal advice to executive leadership on complex, sensitive or high-risk matters, including statutory interpretation, governance and organisational risk.
- Experience leading or overseeing a legal practice or specialist professional team, including supervision of senior practitioners and management of complex legal workloads.
- Comprehensive understanding of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, Native Title Act 1993 and other legislative and regulatory frameworks affecting the NLC and its constituents.
- High-level communication and negotiation skills, including the ability to provide clear and authoritative advice to senior leaders, Traditional Owners and external stakeholders.
- Strong analytical and organisational capability, with the ability to manage competing priorities and support legally robust decision-making.
- High-level cultural capability and the ability to work effectively within an Aboriginal-controlled organisation, including respectful engagement with Traditional Owners and understanding of community priorities.
- Experience managing financial resources, budgets or external legal expenditure within delegated authority.
- Current driver's licence and willingness to undertake remote travel.
- National Police Clearance or ability to obtain.

DESIRABLE REQUIREMENTS

- Lived experience, cultural knowledge or community connection relevant to Aboriginal communities within the Northern Land Council region.
- Experience working within an Aboriginal-controlled organisation, Land Council, Native Title Representative Body, Prescribed Body Corporate or similar environment.
- Experience navigating complex decision-making processes involving Traditional Owners, community governance structures and statutory frameworks.
- Experience contributing to strategic advocacy, policy development or initiatives that advance the rights and interests of Aboriginal people.