



Articles at the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office

Why I chose VGSO

By Zoe Jackson, Articled Clerk, Administrative Law Branch

I chose to do my Articles at the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office (VGSO) because of a strong personal interest in government and a desire to avoid the meaningless quasi-administrative tasks and excessive working hours experienced by friends in commercial law firms. I am nearly six months into my Articles and my experience has validated my decision.

The VGSO is the primary provider of legal services to the State Government and the exclusive provider of services relating to constitutional law, the new Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and native title. This gives VGSO employees unique exposure to the workings of government and access to work which is varied, stimulating, topical and high-profile. Articled Clerks become meaningfully involved in this work from day one.

During my time here, I have enjoyed extensive client contact and have been involved in researching and writing high-level legal advice for government departments, drafting court submissions and even instructing on a matter in the Supreme Court. I have helped clients to manage important public infrastructure, determine native title claims and clarify their obligations under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Vic). In my next rotations, I can look forward to providing legal advice to the Victorian Police, working on coronial inquests and possibly even doing a brief stint at the Office of Public Prosecutions.

Formal training, a mentoring system for ACs and the friendly, caring culture has ensured that I have always felt supported in undertaking these new tasks. Solicitors, even principals, have an open-door policy, genuinely welcome questions and take a keen interest in ACs' training and development. The traditional apprenticeship model – in which experienced lawyers take pride in training the new generation – still finds a home at VGSO.

In addition, the generally deceptive rhetoric regarding work/life balance is actually implemented here. I normally leave the office at 5.30pm and have never been asked to work on weekends. This reflects the VGSO's policy that every employee should be able to have a full life outside of the law, which is sadly rare but a refreshing attitude in legal circles.

I highly recommend VGSO as a stimulating and supportive environment in which to learn the essentials of legal practice.