

Position Description



Position Title:	Advocate
Reports to:	Advocacy Lead
Department:	Advocacy Team
Position Type	0.8 FTE Contract to 30/06/2025
Classification	Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services industry Award 2010 Community development worker SCHADS Level 4

About VMIAC

VMIAC is the peak Victorian non-government organisation for people with lived experience of mental health issues or emotional distress. We work from a rights-based perspective.

Our vision is a world where all mental health consumers stand proud, live a life with choices honoured, rights upheld, and these principles are embedded in all aspects of society.

We undertake individual, group and systemic advocacy and our work includes research and evaluation, education and training, information provision and resource development, as well as limited specialist support programs. We have a strong and continuous focus on engagement with members, and on informing and supporting them in becoming empowered and having their voices heard.

VMIAC is owned, governed, managed, and staffed by people with a lived experience. We aim to be an organisation in which the diversity of people with a lived experience can meaningfully and powerfully contribute and the employer of choice for the mental health lived experience workforce. We know that by working well together we become a true force for systems change and reshaping consumer experience.

www.vmiac.org.au

Position overview

VMIAC's Advocacy Team is staffed and led by people with lived experience. Our program delivers short-term, goal-focused education and support to consumers, utilising a self-advocacy, strengths-based capacity building approach.

We provide face to face, phone-based advocacy and 3-way calls with other services for VMIAC consumers who have a lived experience with mental illness, enabling them to make their own choices and have their rights and interests respected, giving consumers a voice. Creation and execution of advocacy plans, supporting people to have their choices honoured and their rights upheld. This position also supports the development work needed to ensure rural and regional access.

The position is part of a small but highly supportive team culture, actively contributing to collaborative problem solving and continuous improvement.

THIS IS A LIVED EXPERIENCE, CONSUMER POSITION

Applicants must be people with lived experience of mental health challenges, trauma or emotional distress and/or who have accessed mental health or other related services specifically to support their mental well being.

Applicants must consider themselves to be work ready; be capable of reflecting on how their own lived experience interacts with that of others; and be able of contributing to the development and implementation of collaborative ways of working.

Working Relationships

Internal	External
CEO	Consumers and consumer groups
Advocacy Lead	Mental health Services- Clinical and Community
The Advocacy Team	Medical Practitioners
Rest of Team VMIAAC as required	Department of Health and Human Services
	Mental Health Complaints Commissioner
	IMHA
	Family Members and Carers

Key Responsibilities

Self-Advocacy

- To respond quickly and professionally to enquiries from consumers seeking assistance, providing information, resources and time-limited goal specific support and advocacy on a range of issues.
- Talk with consumers to identify if and how their rights have been breached, providing information on potential courses of action and steps that can be taken.
- Gain a thorough understanding of the requirements of each consumer to ensure the best advocacy option is offered and the appropriate course of action is available to support the needs of the consumer.
- Encourage consumers to be involved in their own care, treatment or rehabilitation program.
- Where appropriate, refer consumers to services that may be better equipped to meet their needs.
- Provide information to consumers who wish to self-advocate, ensuring they understand their rights and responsibilities and how to voice any concerns in the appropriate manner, so their issues are heard and addressed.
- Providing up to date information to consumers. Maintaining current knowledge about relevant legislation, policy and practice are current enabling high-quality advocacy support to individuals and their networks.

Individual Advocacy

- Where consumers are not able to self-advocate, provide assistance in representing them via the telephone, in person and electronically to ensure their issues and concerns are raised and addressed.

- Consult with consumers to identify and contact the appropriate specialists or organisations and advocate on their behalf, raising concerns, addressing their needs, initiating actions and proposing acceptable outcomes.
- Assist and support consumers in a range of correspondence to self-advocate with requests such as information for freedom of information and referrals to relevant agencies.
- Follow up with consumers, keeping them up to date with the status of their short-term advocacy issues.
- Engage warmly and professionally to all enquiries referring consumers to appropriate internal and external supports and resources as required.
- Assisting consumers with complaints processes.
- Networking with services in metropolitan regional and rural Victoria, and when required referring consumers to services better equipped to meet their needs.

Systemic Advocacy

- Use information and examples gleaned from consumer groups and individuals to identify key systemic issues to enable VMIAC to advocate for changes to relevant legislation, policies, and practices.

Administration

- Review of incoming emails, responding to consumer enquiries and referring any other requests to the relevant staff member.
- Ensure that accurate consumer information is documented and stored confidentially, within the VMIAC database and adhere to DSS, NDAP partnership and SCORE input practices.
- Keep clear and accurate notes and advocacy plans in accordance with VMIAC policy and procedure and relevant legal obligations.
- Monthly project planning to set advocacy activities for the period.
- Formal reporting of program activity including statistics for the month, advocacy activities, status of workload and any areas requiring support or assistance.

Teamwork and Communication

- Attendance and representation of VMIAC at identified education, training, and information workshops and forums.
- Attend weekly Advocacy Team meetings, contributing to the growth and development of the team by providing feedback, information, raising issues to discuss and identifying training needs, unless required elsewhere as a priority.
- Attend monthly VMIAC all staff meetings.
- Embrace the Code of Conduct working to create a safe, supportive and happy workplace
- Recognise requirements for self-care and identify requirements for additional support.
- Respecting boundaries, provide peer support to colleagues where it is safe to do so
- Actively contribute to Workplace Health and Safety by taking reasonable care for personal health and safety and that of others in the workplace; raising suggestions and concerns as they arise to ensure a safe work environment for employees, consumers and visitors
- Undertake self-evaluation in conjunction with supervisors and/or peers
- Complete tasks as assigned and requested by management.

Quality and Safety Support

- Provide administrative support to accreditation activities.
- Contribute to resource development as required for the advocacy team.

- Contribute ideas and feedback to VMIAAC Policy and Procedure.

Key Selection Criteria (these are the criteria to be addressed in application)

Advocacy

- Demonstrates a commitment to consumer participation at an individual, group and organisational level.
- A strong commitment to the protection of human rights and the fostering of equality
- Demonstrates an understanding of the intersectional nature of advocacy, identity and structural barriers.
- Solid experience in applying Peer Work and Person-Centred practice in assisting and supporting consumers.
- Demonstrated experience delivering advocacy services within community development programs, in Mental Health.
- Demonstrated experience providing one-on-one support, information and referral services to individuals.
- Demonstrated ability to understand and apply legislation and policies, including the ability to identify issues, problem solve and negotiate.
- Ability to manage and respond to distress and heightened emotions.
- Ability to adapt and change advocacy plan to meet situational changes.
- Efficient and effective time management skills including a demonstrated ability to prioritise work under limited supervision to meet timelines.
- Sound analytical skills with the ability to review and solve problems as they arise.

Collaboration

- A demonstrated ability to connect and collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders, including Carers, families, mental health services, disability supports, homeless support services and mainstream services.
- Strong organisational skills with an ability to effectively plan work to meet objectives and manage the needs of consumers.
- Trauma informed practice would be an advantage.
- Ability to reflect and ask for support where needed.

Communication

- Strong communication and interpersonal skills with skills and experience in working with diversity, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQ+, CALD communities.
- Demonstrated written skills with experience writing letters, reports, case notes, and submissions.
- Sound verbal skills and professional presentation.
- Intermediate skills and competence in Microsoft Office

Supportive Teamwork

- Respecting boundaries, provide peer support to colleagues where it is safe to do so.

Essential Qualifications, experience, knowledge and registration

- Tertiary education, i.e., relevant certificate or degree qualifications, in community services, community development or other relevant areas or an equivalent combination of life and work experiences, education and training

- A lived experience of mental health issues or emotional issues and knowledge or experience of issues facing consumers of mental health services is essential for this role.
- Current Police Check and Working with Children Check
- Prepared to travel for work purposes in metropolitan and rural regional areas of Victoria - A current Victorian Driver's License is preferred but not essential.
- Skills with Office 365 and databases required to record data.
- Understanding of the National Standards for Disability Services.

Summary of Key Result Areas

Key Result Areas	Key Performance Indicators
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage monthly caseload targets • Develop contacts with Peer networks and Communities across rural Victoria • All materials produced meet legal and ethical requirements and VMIAC standards • Required reporting meets designated timeframes.
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in partnership with consumers, create and execute advocacy plans which are reflective of consumer goals and needs. • Maintain confidentiality and privacy • Collect data, maintain clear case notes on all interactions with consumers and stakeholders in a timely manner.
Teamwork and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect VMIAC values in supporting a collaborative work environment • Maintain open communication and active support in achieving shared goals • Respecting boundaries, provide peer support to colleagues where it is safe to do so

Special Conditions

- VMIAC is state-wide organisation and regional /rural travel may be required to meet with service providers, agencies and communities.
- Use of company vehicle for business purposes.
- Use of company laptop and mobile phone as required.
- Position is subject to funding.

References and checks, probationary period

- Preferred candidates are required to complete and/or provide Police and Working with Children checks prior to final confirmation and commencement of employment.
- Referees are required and will be contacted for short listed applicants
- This role is subject to a probationary period of six months.

Support and development

VMIAC will provide regular consumer-perspective supervision and mentoring to the person in this role. All VMIAC roles include training and development opportunities, which can include the development of leadership and other required skills and attendance at conferences.

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL:	Conducted annually as per schedule.
TRAINING:	Refer to Annual Training Calendar

I, _____ (**print name**) acknowledge that I have read (or have had read to me) and understand the requirements of this position. I agree to work in accordance with this position description and that I understand the implications if I don't follow the Quality Management System.

Employee Signature: _____

Date: / /

CEO Signature: _____

Date: / /