

Cultivating reflective practice in the Victorian Legal profession

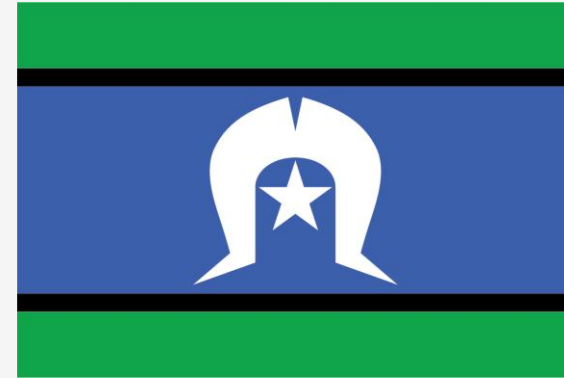
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Acknowledgement of Country



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People as the Traditional Custodians of Naarm (Melbourne), the land on which our office sits. We pay our respects to their Elders; past and present. We support Treaty for Victoria

The Victorian legal profession in FY2025-26

Financial Year

FY2025-26



31,281

registered lawyers in
Victoria, up by 3.5%



2,114

new lawyers admitted in
Victoria



13.2%

lawyers in Government
and 28.4% lawyers in-
house



56.3%

of Victorian lawyers are
women



62.8%

of lawyers work in the
Melbourne CBD and 11.2%
work in regional Victoria



7185

lawyers are subject to
supervised legal practice
condition



7164

Principal practitioners



47.6%

of lawyers work for an
incorporated legal practice or a
sole practice



927

lawyers that had
complaints registered
against them



1 Early Intervention Strategy

VLSB+C proactively identifies and engages with law practices to address emerging issues and mitigate risks, including a key emphasis on the role of reflection and adjusting continuing professional development (CPD) to address capability gaps.



2 Costs Support Program

Invites voluntary participation by practitioners with a record of low-risk but repeated costs complaints enabling reflection and the development of new capabilities to improve practice.



5 Early Career Lawyer Capability Framework and Reflective Practice Template

Which aim to embed the core skill of reflective practice at the point of embarking on a legal career.



3 Ethics Self Assessment Checklists

Which are also designed to encourage lawyers to reflect on their skills and capabilities and development needs in ethics across their career.



REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

A core capability that underpins ethical, competent and adaptive legal practice



4 Lawyer Wellbeing Program

Whose body of work includes research, a Systems Theory of Change that highlights learning and reflective practice outcomes, with pilots to support practical progress and guidelines for legal workplaces.



Through these initiatives, VLSB+C fosters a culture of reflective practice that strengthens capability, promotes ethical practice and supports better outcomes for clients and the community.

Legend

- Focus Area
- Sectoral Level
- Organisational Level
- Interpersonal Level
- Individual Level

Intense workloads / long work hours / time demands

Lack of supportive / capable managers / micromanagement / poor communication

Toxic workplace or sector / poor workplace culture or attitudes / low morale

High levels of stress and pressure / high stakes

Poor work-life balance / self-care routines / inability to switch off

Culture of perfectionism / unreasonable expectations / hyper-critical culture / fear of making mistakes

Clients with unrealistic expectations / difficult clients / clients' own misinformation or lack of understanding of the law

Hyper competitiveness / lack of collegiality / lack of professional network

Lack of respect / value / recognition / appreciation by different people in the system towards lawyers

Deadlines or timeframes / level / fees / client / judicial / court

Role of the regulator / regulatory systems and processes / costs to practice

Difficult / complex areas of work / matters / volume of material

Absence of mentoring / professional development for staff / leaving / modelling positive behaviours

Use of cases / cost of being / ongoing / ongoing / ongoing

Use of cases / cost of being / ongoing / ongoing / ongoing

Use of cases / cost of being / ongoing / ongoing / ongoing

Supporting high-needs clients / clients in crisis / lack of support available to support clients

Courts are unaffordable / new businesses in different / separate

Concealability expectations (QAD consent or being reachable) / phone always on

Lack of appropriate boundaries / skills to set limits / individual resilience / burnout

Poor wellbeing among Victorian legal professionals

-  Focus Area
-  Sectoral Level
-  Organisational Level
-  Interpersonal Level
-  Individual Level

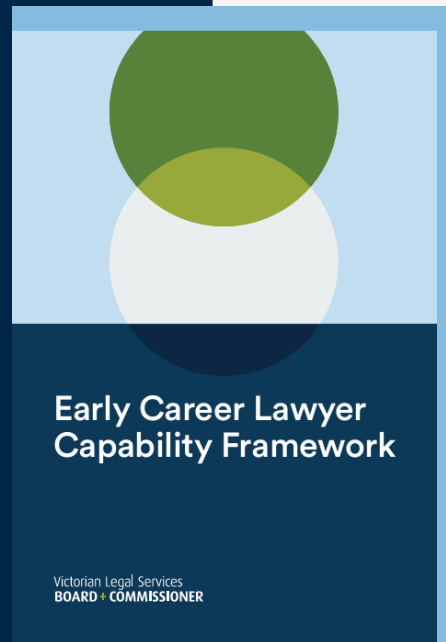


Lawyer Wellbeing Systems Theory of Change



Early Career Capabilities and Reflective Practice

A framework that includes the establishment of effective ethical and reflective practice at the earliest stage of practice and support both supervised lawyers and supervisors.



Professional development and wellbeing

All lawyers should regularly reflect on, and address, their professional development and wellbeing needs.

5.1 Professional development

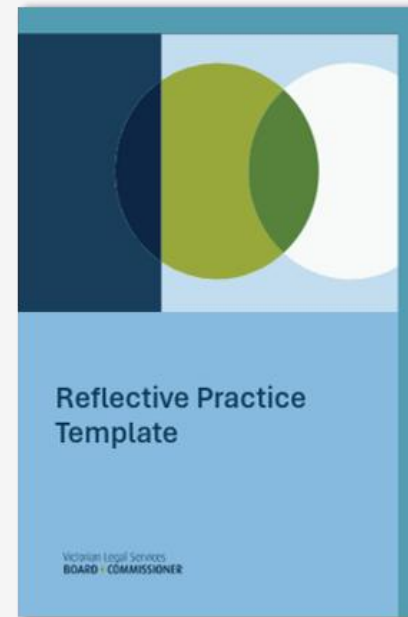
Capabilities	Performance indicators
Reflects on and addresses professional development needs	• Meaningfully engages in reflective practice in relation to their own knowledge, skills and abilities (e.g. by using the VLSB+C's Reflective Practice Template) • Identifies when further development or training is needed to improve their own professional performance • Undertakes continuing professional development activities to address identified development needs and complies with CPD Rules • Actively seeks feedback (e.g. via supervision or mentoring) on professional performance and acts on this feedback to enhance professional practice

5.2 Wellbeing

Capabilities	Performance indicators
Reflects on and addresses wellbeing issues	• Understands the factors that can negatively affect workplace and personal wellbeing and psychosocial health (e.g. high workload, stress, vicarious trauma, negative workplace behaviour and culture)

Early Career Capabilities and Reflective Practice

This will help all lawyers – especially early career lawyers – to reflect on their progress, practice, professional development and wellbeing.



How to use this template

There are a number of ways to approach reflective practice. This template is based on Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, which describes a simple and straightforward six-step reflective process:



You can use this template to reflect on any situation, experience or event that you think would be useful to explore and learn from. Examples might be:

- your professional performance (e.g. on a particular matter or a complex court appearance)
- challenging interactions with clients or colleagues
- a professional development activity
- uncertainty in your work
- barriers to progress.

Reflective practice can also be used before or during an experience. Doing this can help you to prepare for, adapt to, or mitigate issues.

You can engage in reflective practice with a mentor or in a group, but if you are new to it, we recommend starting by yourself. You don't need to share or provide records of your reflections to anyone or keep them on file – they are personal reflections.

If you're an early career lawyer, you may find it helpful to share your reflections (or aspects of them) with your supervisor, provided it is a psychologically safe environment and you feel comfortable doing so. If you're a supervisor, it can be powerful to model and share your reflective practice (or aspects of it) with your supervisees.

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Thank you!