


ODPP First Nations Legal Mentoring Program



April 2024

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ODPP First Nations Legal Mentoring Program

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our offices are located and where we provide services to the people of New South Wales. We recognise the rich histories, languages and customs of the Traditional Custodians and pay respect to Elders past and present. The ODPP honours the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships with the land and waters.

The ODPP is committed to improving employment outcomes for First Nations peoples by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development. This commitment is reflected in item 8 of the ODPP's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan.

One way to improve these outcomes is by establishing a formal mentoring program for First Nations lawyers throughout New South Wales ('the Program'). The Program will be available to both internal and external First Nations lawyers, including solicitors and barristers.

The Program will provide mentees with access to the knowledge and skills of experienced practitioners, and opportunities to learn and develop as a legal professional in a confidential and safe environment. The mentoring relationship will also provide mentees with a forum to explore other facets of legal practice including wellbeing, work life balance, time management, court expectations, networking, career progression and culturally specific matters.

The mentees will be mentored by Crown Prosecutors. Under the Program, these mentors will have the opportunity to develop leadership and coaching skills whilst contributing to the development of the legal profession.

The ODPP adopts the definition of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders as set out in the High Court in the Tasmanian Dams Case (*Commonwealth v Tasmania (1983) 158 CLR 1*). This involves a three part test:

- (i) a person must be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island descent,
- (ii) who identifies as an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander, and
- (iii) who is accepted by the relevant community as an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander.

The Program will be overseen by a committee established by the Director and Chaired by Mr Philip Hogan, Deputy Senior Crown Prosecutor. The Chair, or their delegate, will be the coordinator of this Program and point of contact. The Chair will periodically update the ODPP Diversity, Equality & Inclusion Working Group regarding the Program periodically.

The Mentoring Program

1. The Program

Mentees and Mentors will have the opportunity to:

- Be matched for the duration of the Program;
- Attend networking sessions
- Attend information sessions and training as appropriate; and
- Provide feedback and suggestions for the Program.

The ODPP will support this Program by:

- Providing appropriate training and support for staff who act or will act as mentors; and
- Acknowledging significant individual contributions and exemplary practice as a mentor in performance reviews.

Testimonials from 2023 mentees include:

'The opportunity to benefit from the advice and support of an experienced ODPP Crown Prosecutor such as Guy Newton SC was invaluable ... and has inspired me to pursue a career in prosecution.'

'I believe an initiative such as this is particularly beneficial for First Nations lawyers who may not have considered this possibility previously as it demonstrates that the organisation is truly welcoming and a place where we can belong. It can also break down the apprehension caused by the fear of the unknown as we are able to better understand the work of the NSW ODPP and the positive contribution we make to the community as First Nations ODDP staff.'

Zachary Wone, 2023 Mentee

...

'I am sincerely grateful for the privilege of participating in the 2023 ODPP First Nations Legal Mentoring Program. The opportunity to be mentored by a highly accomplished Crown Prosecutor is a rare and invaluable experience. Their generosity in sharing extensive experience and insights has played a pivotal role in shaping my perspective on my legal career. I extend my sincere thanks to the ODPP and the mentors for their valuable support and guidance, which has been an asset in my professional development.' 2023 Mentee

2. Eligibility

To be eligible to apply, the following criteria must be met:

Mentors

- Be an appointed Crown Prosecutor; and
- Have completed the ODPP 'Introduction to Aboriginal Cultural Awareness' Training.

Mentees:

- Be admitted as a Solicitor or Barrister in New South Wales; or
- Be currently studying a Bachelor or Master of Law, or Diploma in Law.

And

- Be able to provide either:
 - a certificate of Aboriginality, if available, or
 - a letter of support from an Elder in their community.

3. Mentoring guidelines

- Confidentiality and trust are essential elements of the mentoring relationship. It is expected that ODPP participants will conduct themselves in a professional manner and uphold the ODPP [Signature Behaviours - Guidelines](#).
- Mentees and mentors are expected to meet at least monthly.
- The mentee will set the agenda for meetings. The mentor will assist the mentee to develop goals in line with the training provided to them.
- The mentor will help the mentee examine their self-development and career management.
- The mentor can act as a role model, sounding board, assist with networking, challenge ideas, or simply listen.
- Mentoring does not involve day-to-day supervision or involvement in the mentee's work.
- Participants should be mindful of the other's time, and should respect the position of others such as managers or colleagues.
- Participants are encouraged to attempt resolve any issues between themselves before raising with the coordinator. If the mentoring relationship cannot be established or maintained, participants may request a change of partner.
- If support is needed by either participant due to a distressing or personal situation, the participant should be encouraged to contact:

- The Employment Assistance Program for ODPP staff - [Telus Health](#) (1300 360 364)The Law Society of NSW's Solicitor Outreach Service (SOS) on [1800 592 296](#)
- BarCare through the Bar Association on [0427 317 958](#) or jhouen@barcare.org

4. Applications

Applications for mentees will be called for through a number of channels including the Koori Mail, university First Nations law centres and/or Law faculties. The Program may also be promoted at University careers fairs and through the Law Society and Bar Association.

Applications, including a short description of how the mentee meets the eligibility criteria, are to be sent via email to ODPPFNMP@odpp.nsw.gov.au by the close date.

Suitability for the program will be assessed on the application submitted via email only. Applicants will be notified by the Chair of the First Nations Mentoring Program Committee after the close date as to whether they have been accepted into the program.

5. Timeline

Applications open:	Monday 15 April 2024
Applications close:	Monday 13 May 2024
Matches announced:	Monday 20 May 2024
Program launched:	End of May 2024
Program close:	Friday 8 December 2024

6. Locations

The ODPP has 10 offices, including regional offices across New South Wales, which are each able to accommodate mentoring relationships.

7. Confidentiality

The work performed by the ODPP may involve confidential information. All mentees will be required to sign an Agreement to Keep Information Confidential prior to embarking on the mentoring arrangement.

[Confidentiality Agreement.pdf \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

8. Review

The Program will be reviewed after a full 12-month cycle.

9. Contact

For more information, please visit our [website](#) and/or email ODPPFNMP@odpp.nsw.gov.au .