

ITEM FOR ESTABLISHMENT SUBCOMMITTEE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE

HEAD 94 - LEGAL AID DEPARTMENT Subhead 001 Salaries

Members are invited to recommend to Finance Committee the retention of the following supernumerary post in the Legal Aid Department for a period of 15 months from 1 July 2001 to 30 September 2002 -

1 Assistant Principal Legal Aid Counsel
(DL1) (\$98,250 - \$104,250)

PROBLEM

The Director of Legal Aid (DLA) needs a dedicated officer at directorate level to plan and co-ordinate the implementation of an Information Systems Strategy (ISS) in the Legal Aid Department (LAD) which has been re-scheduled. The approved supernumerary post of Assistant Principal Legal Aid Counsel (APLAC) (DL1) for the implementation of the project has remained unfilled due to the revised implementation plan and will lapse on 1 July 2001.

PROPOSAL

2. DLA, with the support of the Director of Administration, proposes to retain the approved supernumerary APLAC post for a period of 15 months from 1 July 2001 to 30 September 2002 to oversee the implementation of the ISS.

/JUSTIFICATION

JUSTIFICATION

Re-scheduling of the ISS implementation

3. At its meeting held on 18 February 2000, the Finance Committee approved the creation of a supernumerary APLAC post for a period of 15 months from 1 April 2000 to 30 June 2001 to plan and co-ordinate the implementation of the ISS. The incumbent of the post would assume the role of the Project Director (PD) to oversee the implementation of the core part of the project during this period.

Encl. 1 The original job description of the PD is set out at Enclosure 1.

4. Despite efforts to ensure that the project would be implemented on schedule, delay has been caused by lukewarm interest in the tender for the project. In the open tendering exercise for the acquisition of the ISS systems conducted in early 2000, the Government only received one tender and the terms were not acceptable to the Government. Subsequent negotiations with the tenderer also failed to achieve a desirable result. In the circumstances, the Government had no alternative but to cancel the tender.

5. In the light of the unsuccessful tendering exercise, LAD reviewed the manner and schedule of the implementation of the ISS project. To expedite the process, instead of re-tendering the whole project, LAD, in consultation with the Information Technology Services Department (ITSD), decided to -

- (a) re-tender only the development work of the case management and case accounting systems (CM&CAS) which is the major part of the ISS system; and
- (b) engage contractors under the existing Government Bulk Purchase Contract to construct the remaining systems, including the personnel management system, assets management system and supporting infrastructure.

6. According to the revised implementation plan, the live-run of the personnel management system, assets management system and supporting infrastructure have already taken place in March 2001. As regards the CM&CAS, its schedule was revised as follows -

Activity	Original Starting Date	Revised Starting Date
Procurement of hardware and software and system development (for CM&CAS)	April 2000	June 2001
ISS system live-run (CM&CAS)	June 2001	September 2002

7. DLA reckoned that the timing for filling the supernumerary APLAC post approved for the project should be re-considered in the light of the revised implementation plan for the ISS project. DLA noted that, as opposed to the CM&CAS, the personnel management and assets management systems as set out in paragraph 5(b) above are relatively small in scale and only involve a small number of operation staff. The supervisory and monitoring roles which the APLAC can play over these minor systems are rather minimal. As regards the development of the supporting infrastructure, it only involves mainly technical work for which advice and assistance can readily be sourced from ITSD. DLA therefore decided to proceed with the construction of these minor systems without filling the APLAC post. These systems were completed in March 2001.

8. A new tender for the CM&CAS part of the project was called in October 2000 and closed in December 2000. As the progress on technical assessment and price evaluation has been satisfactory, we expect that the contract will be awarded in June 2001 and completed by 30 September 2002.

Need to retain the supernumerary APLAC post

9. After awarding the new contract, the development of the CM&CAS will require very substantial contribution from LAD. This part of the ISS supports the major workflow of the Department for the provision of legal aid services to the public. Apart from computerising the business processes including applications processing, case assignment, case monitoring (in-house and assigned-out), case accounting and payments to the legally aided persons and assigned lawyers, the systems will provide vital information and statistics in formulating management decisions. As this core part of the ISS is intended to address the future business needs of LAD, it requires a directorate officer who is conversant with the operation and information needs of the Department to oversee the design and development of the project.

10. The development of the CM&CAS will last from June 2001 to end September 2002. This particular period requires the active involvement and substantial contribution of the PD. He is expected to provide overall leadership, guidance, supervision and, in particular, effective co-ordination between the contractor and staff of various sections and divisions in the Department. He needs to develop departmental data policies and to make prompt and sound decisions independently in dealing with the contractor. He will collaborate with directorate and senior staff in user sections and divisions with a view to consolidating specific system requirements to meet their operative objectives. He should also lead various business re-engineering processes based on the integrated system to be installed to improve service delivery. Given the scale of the project, the speciality of the work involved and the level of responsibilities to be undertaken by the incumbent, DLA considers it necessary to retain the supernumerary APLAC post for a period of 15 months until the completion of the CM&CAS to tie in with the contract period.

Encl. 2 Detailed justifications for the supernumerary APLAC post are at Enclosure 2.

11. Since the existing supernumerary APLAC post is due to lapse on 1 July 2001, DLA proposes to retain the post which will be filled up to 30 September 2002 so as to tie in with the contract period (June 2001 to 30 September 2002). Given that the job nature and level of responsibilities of the supernumerary APLAC post will not change, the job description for the post at Enclosure 1 will continue to apply. The incumbent will be responsible to the Deputy Director of Legal Aid (Policy and Administration) (DL3) who heads the Administration Division. The proposed organisation chart of the Administration

Encl. 3 Division of the LAD following the retention of the APLAC post is at Enclosure 3.

12. DLA has reviewed the establishment of the existing directorate structure to ascertain if the work of the PD could be absorbed within the existing staff complement. The existing seven APLACs in the Department and the additional APLAC post proposed to be created in the Application and Processing Division (A&PD) [vide EC(2001-02)2] each take charge of a functional section and are responsible for the management of their respective sections including staff training and supervision. As these section heads already carry a very heavy caseload and having regard to the heavy commitment required of the PD, DLA considers that the existing APLACs and the additional APLAC post in A&PD do not have sufficient capacity to absorb the additional workload on full-time basis.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

13. The additional notional annual salary cost of the proposal at MID-POINT is \$1,213,200. The additional full annual average staff cost of the proposal, including salaries and staff on-costs, is \$2,117,000. We have included sufficient provision in the 2001-02 Estimates to meet the cost of this proposal.

14. This proposal has no direct consequence on the non-directorate establishment of LAD.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

15. On 2 July 1999, the Finance Committee approved [vide FCR(1999-2000)29] a new commitment of \$44,366,000 for implementing an ISS in LAD to replace its outdated and fragmented computer systems with an integrated information system. The ISS project consists of the implementation of the personnel management system, the assets management system, infrastructure system and the case management and case accounting system. After completion, it will enhance the departmental efficiency and the quality of our services to the legal aid clients. Apart from provision of an efficient communication network for some 600 staff as well as a capability to generate bilingual documents, it will have the capacity to capture and to provide the necessary information and support to the management of legal aid cases. We set out a brief description of the ISS system at

Encl. 4 Enclosure 4.

CONSULTATION WITH LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL

16. The Legislative Council Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services will be briefed on the proposal on 24 April 2001. Members will be apprised of the outcome of discussions of the Panel.

CIVIL SERVICE BUREAU COMMENTS

17. Chief Secretary for Administration's Office has considered carefully alternative means to provide the required directorate support to meet the service need bearing in mind the need to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. The Office considers this proposal the most appropriate way to proceed. Having regard to the justifications put forward, the Civil Service Bureau supports the retention of the proposed supernumerary directorate post and considers the grading and ranking of the post to be appropriate. As at 1 April 2001, there were 14 directorate posts in LAD.

ADVICE OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON DIRECTORATE SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

18. As the post is proposed on a supernumerary basis, its retention, if approved, will be reported to the Standing Committee on Directorate Salaries and Conditions of Service in accordance with the agreed procedure.

**Job Description of Project Director
(APLAC) (DL1)
Legal Aid Department**

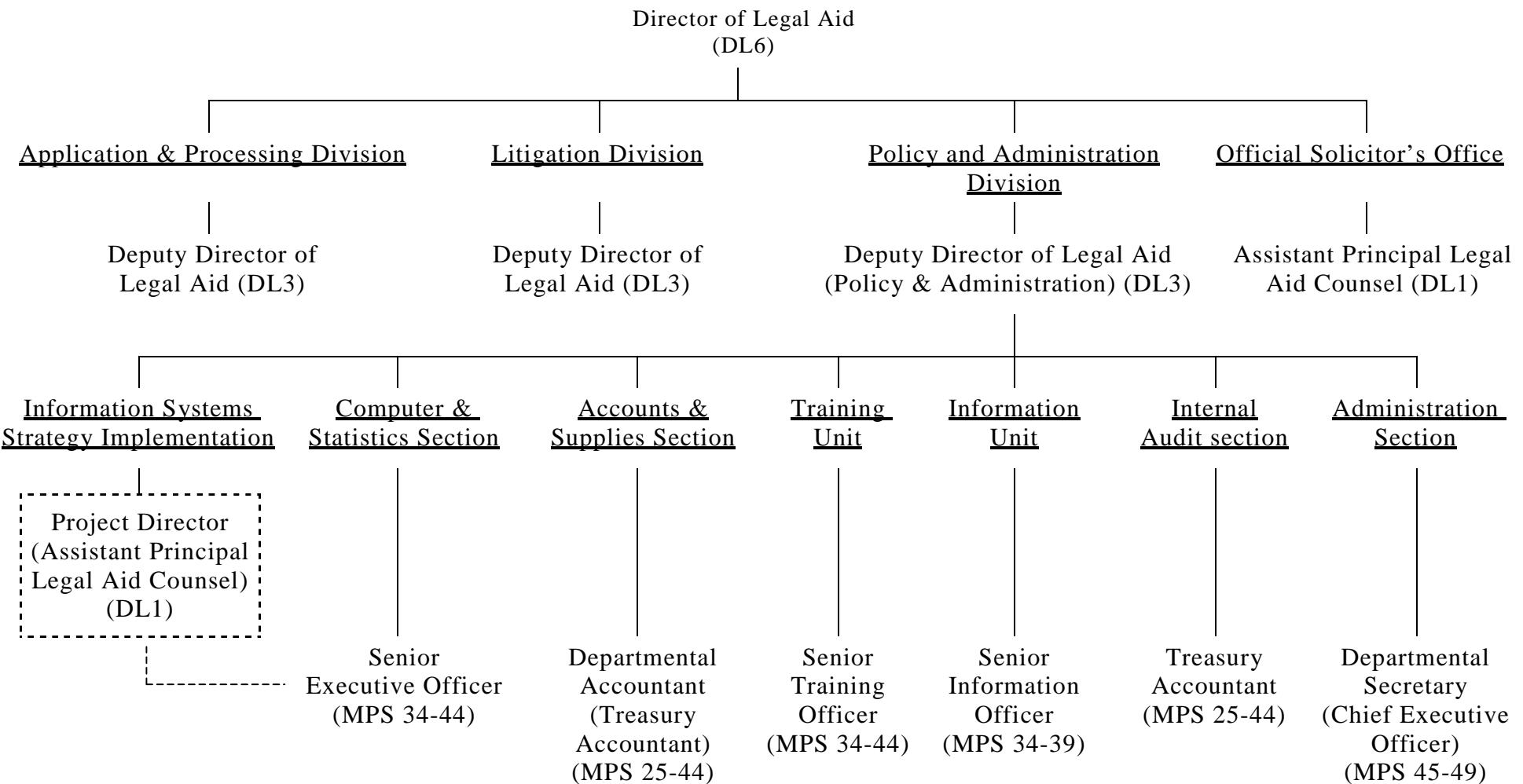
Responsible to Deputy Director of Legal Aid (Policy and Administration) for overseeing the implementation of Information Systems Strategy (ISS). The major duties and responsibilities include -

- (a) to lead an ISS Team in planning, monitoring and co-ordinating the implementation of the ISS in the Department and to control its expenditure;
- (b) to co-ordinate with divisions/sections/units and to consult their heads on the specific information and function requirements of the new system including data capture, screen display, reports to be generated and business rules to be set up;
- (c) to identify and manage business process re-engineering actions arising from the ISS implementation including examining possible areas of improvement in workflow, co-ordinating the changes and resolving problems and conflicts arising from such implementation;
- (d) to work closely with the contractors to map out the framework for development, testing and installation of the new system and to supervise their performance;
- (e) to liaise with other government departments on information inter-exchange with their systems including negotiation of inter-departmental agreements for data inter-change; and
- (f) to develop departmental policies on data administration (i.e. the standards and controls of data capture, storage, security, retrieval, retention and destruction) and access rights to data.

Detailed justifications for the APLAC post

- (a) The APLAC, designated as Project Director (PD), will co-ordinate departmental efforts to ensure that the new system will meet the overall system and function requirements of the various units of the Department. He should be a legal professional who is familiar with the operation and information needs of the Department;
- (b) in the course of implementation of the project, the PD will consolidate the specific system requirements, including defining screens, data elements and business rules. This will require co-operation of all units, sections and divisions and will involve extensive consultation with staff at all ranks, including division heads and section heads at directorate levels. The ranking of the post holder must be sufficiently senior to ensure the co-ordination is smoothly and effectively done;
- (c) business process re-engineering will be necessary in implementing the ISS in order to exploit maximum advantage of the integrated system to be installed. The PD must have appropriate authority to work closely with the contractors to examine, recommend or decide areas of improvement and to resolve any problems and conflicts which may arise from the changes;
- (d) the PD will also be the Department's representative in liaising with suppliers/contractors and other government departments. He will meet the suppliers/contractors regularly and will be delegated appropriate authorities to make prompt and sound decision on behalf of the Department so as to avoid delays in implementing the system; and
- (e) the PD will plan and monitor progress of the ISS, deploy resources at different stages of the development, and monitor the expenditure for the project. He will also be required to develop departmental policies on data administration and right of access to information in the system.

Proposed Organisation Chart of the Administration Division, Legal Aid Department



**Brief Description of the ISS System
Legal Aid Department**

The ISS System of the Legal aid Department will comprise the following parts -

(a) **Case Management System & Case Accounting System**

The case management system will support all business activities involved in legal aid cases covering application processing, means assessment, allocation of cases in-house, assignment of cases to lawyers in private practice, monitoring of case progress and case costing for both assigned-out cases and litigation conducted in-house. It will capture almost all information of legal aid cases.

The case accounting system will capture all accounting information and will support the accounting function of legal aid cases including payment, collection of money, finalisation of accounts etc.

(b) **Personnel Management System**

The personnel management system will maintain the personal particulars, posting history, training and performance records of staff.

(c) **Assets Management System**

The assets management system will maintain a comprehensive record of all equipment and maintenance contracts of the Department.

(d) **Infrastructure Applications**

Six hundred users of the Department will be provided with a networked environment to facilitate access to corporate applications, e-mail facilities and Internet and common office automation facilities. Disaster recovery facilities will also be installed.