

INVITATION TO TENDER

Title: Consultancy services to support to Victoria Law Foundation (VLF) in the conduct of its new Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS)

1.1 Background

The Victoria Law Foundation (VLF), based in Melbourne Australia, will conduct a Victoria-wide Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS). PULS will help us to better understand legal literacy and capability in the Victorian community by exploring what people know about their justice system and its institutions, how they see it playing a part in their lives, and how they experience legal problems.¹

Understanding public knowledge of rights, legal capability and attitudes to justice is an essential first step in improving knowledge of rights and responsibilities and ensuring that justice is accessible to all. It is critical in determining what kinds of legal information and services will be most effective for the community.

The PULS will deliver the tools for monitoring change; identification of areas for improvement in service delivery and intervention; and a baseline for the evaluation of programs. The PULS will reveal strengths and weaknesses in public understanding; deficits in capability; and variation in attitudes by topic, demography and geography.

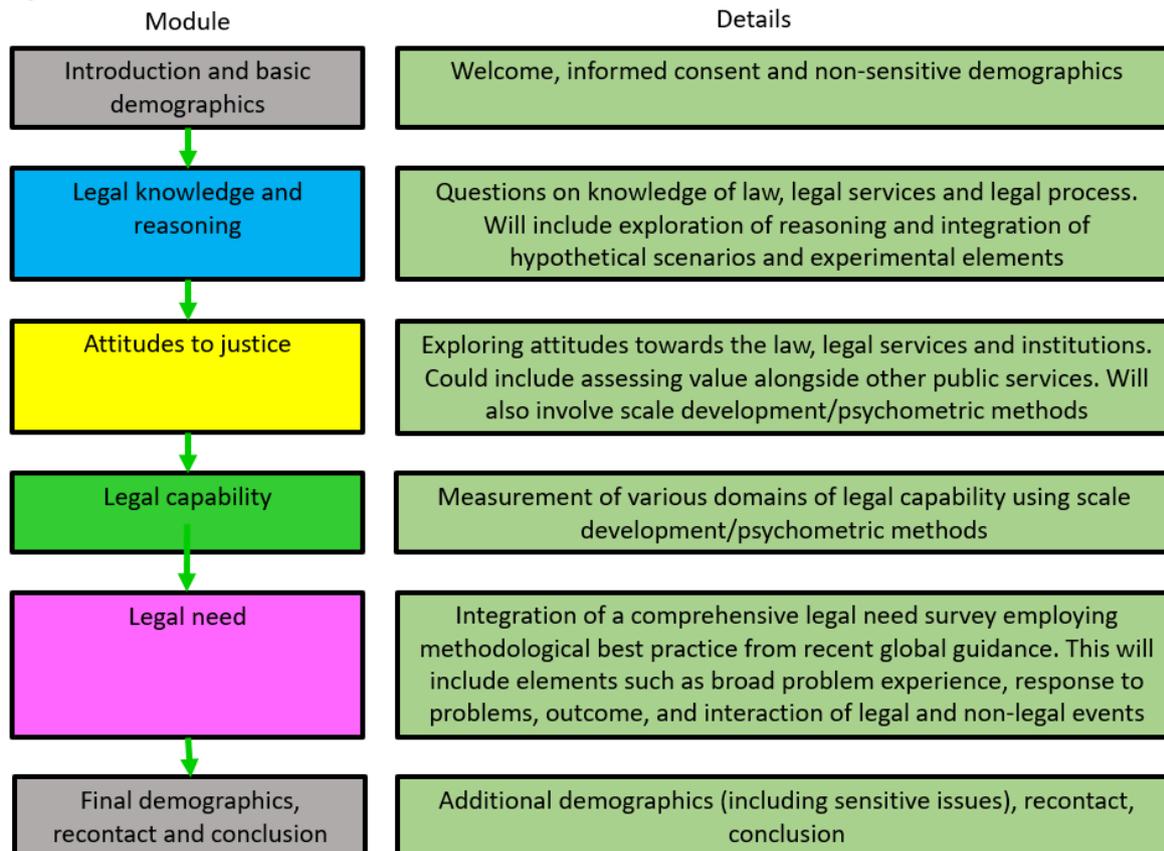
The possible applications of this work in improving access to justice for Victorians are widespread and fundamental. Understanding what Victorians know about their law is vital to developing effective policy and services in an environment where legal need is great, budgets are tight and there will be increasing reliance on citizens to navigate the justice system, often with little or no formal assistance. It will also reveal opportunities and challenges for the legal assistance sector. For example, the practising profession and those involved with community legal education will have a baseline to identify areas of the law where there is need for more support, and to measure change over time.

By integrating legal need survey material, the PULS can also explore legal problem experience, response to problems, and problem outcomes. Critically, this approach means the nexus between attitudes and capability, and justiciable problem-solving behaviour can be examined.

In developing new material on knowledge of rights, legal capability and attitudes to justice and combining these with legal need survey questions, the PULS will be the first of its kind in the world, with the potential to make a significant contribution to empirical access to justice research. The anticipated PULS structure is shown in Figure 1

¹ Content commonly referred to as 'legal need surveys' (OECD/Open Society, 2019).

Figure 1. PULS structure



The PULS will survey approximately 5,000 - 6,000 respondents across Victoria. Our intention is to interview respondents face-to-face for an average of 40 minutes, with the possibility of oversampling of RRR areas.²

1.2 The VLF's PULS researchers

The VLF has existing recognised international expertise in the areas of legal need survey design and analysis, as well as approaches to the measurement of aspects of legal capability, attitudes to justice and knowledge of legal rights. This includes:

Professor Nigel J Balmer (Research Director and Chair of Law and Social Statistics at University College London) is a chartered statistician and scientist and has published extensively in areas relevant to the PULS. He was an author of the recent global guidance on the design and conduct of legal need surveys (for OECD/Open Society, 2019) and has conducted a wide range of empirical work involving survey methodology, legal need, operationalisation and psychometric measurement of domains of legal capability and attitudes to justice.

Dr Hugh McDonald spent over fifteen years at the Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, including making a key contribution to the design and analysis of the influential LAW Survey in Australia. He has worked on a broad range of critical projects in access to justice with an international reputation in the field. This has included work on legal needs, service design, evaluation and empirically capturing aspects of vulnerability and capability.

² Number of respondents, mode of contact, interview length and geography may change as the project progresses, and tasks (and particularly questionnaire design) will need to adapt to respond to changes.

1.3 What we are seeking

The PULS is a new and large, complex piece of empirical research. The VLF is looking for consultancy services to contribute to the development, analysis and reporting of the PULS. Credentialed consultancy services are needed to increase the research team's capacity and complement the existing expertise within the VLF.

The project will place significant demands on the VLF's research team and consultancy services are required to progress the project to the proposed timeframe and enhance its quality and influence.

In particular, we would seek consultancy services with

- recognised empirical legal expertise in legal need survey design
- a record of innovation and expertise in empirical legal methods and approaches to capturing legal need, legal capability, knowledge of rights and attitudes to justice.

The consultancy services would need bring up-to-date international expertise in legal need/legal literacy survey design, ensuring questionnaire design adheres to and develops global best practice and knowledge.

The external perspectives in design and analysis will develop members of the team, and improve our research through collaboration, which the VLF regards as central to quality empirical legal research.

1.4 Tasks involved and project timeframe

The PULS project will run from May 2020 to June 2022. We would anticipate the consultancy services are available to contribute to the project throughout its duration. All tasks would take place in collaboration with VLF researchers. Key tasks and anticipated timeframes are set out below.

- 1) Questionnaire construction – May to November 2020.

The successful tenderer would take a principal role in developing the PULS questionnaire. It is anticipated that the questionnaire will take up to 40 minutes on average, and include multiple modules, complex routing and experimental elements (see Figure 1).

- 2) Questionnaire programming and testing – November 2020 to March 2021

The successful tenderer would help to refine the questionnaire, responding to the results of testing and feedback from the fieldwork company.

- 3) Initial data exploration – October to December 2021

The successful tenderer would collaborate with VLF researchers to work with draft data, to explore issues with the data, clean data and derive variables.

- 4) Data analysis – December 2021 to June 2022

The successful tenderer would make a significant contribution to exploring avenues for analysis, conducting analyses and arranging analyses into a coherent structure.

- 5) Report production – January 2022 and June 2022

The successful tenderer would make a significant contribution to the production of the main project report. They will help to write the report, defining its structure, identifying key findings and placing findings in a global context.

1.5 Responding to the invitation to tender

Your proposal should include

- Your research credentials and their relevance to the current project
- How your experience and skill will add to the VLF's existing expertise.
- Costs breakdown: the number of days needed to complete the proposed tasks, daily rate and total cost.

You are requested to submit your offer electronically to nbalmer@victorialawfoundation.org.au no later than 5pm Australian Eastern standard time on 10/04/2020