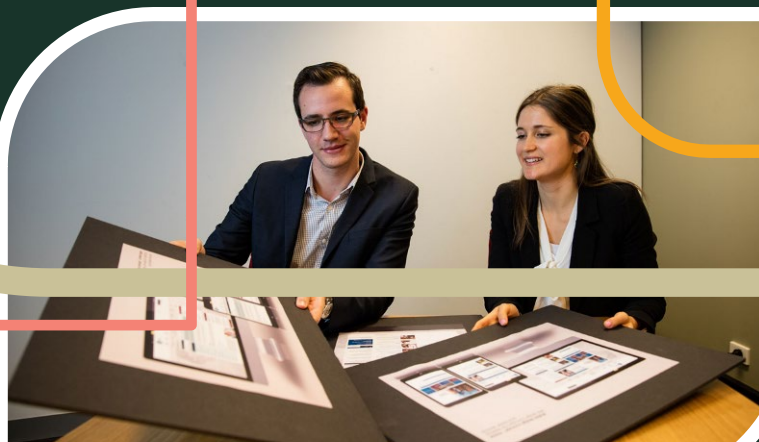




Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

Job Information Pack Chief Counsel



Chief Counsel (SES Band 2)

Job Reference	2025/3692
Division	Legal
Location	Canberra, ACT
Employment Status	Ongoing
Mandatory Requirements	- Under section 22(8) of the Public Service Act 1999, employees must be Australian citizens to be employed in the APS unless the Agency delegate has agreed, in writing. - The department requires the successful candidate to obtain and maintain a Negative Vetting Level 2 security clearance. - You are required to hold a degree in Law, be admitted as a legal practitioner in an Australian court and be eligible to hold an unrestricted legal practising certificate.
Contact Officer	Name: Tess Bishop Phone number: 0437 988 729 Email address: tess.bishop@aff.gov.au
Closing Date	11:00 pm (AEDT), Sunday, 23 November 2025

Step into a key leadership role as Chief Counsel at DAFF, where you'll shape national legal strategy, advise senior leaders, and drive outcomes that protect and grow Australia's agricultural industries. If you're a bold legal thinker ready to lead with integrity and influence, apply now to make a lasting impact.

About the Department

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) leads the Australian Government's efforts to support, protect and grow the country's food and fibre production industries.

We play a pivotal role in developing and promoting Australia's sustainable agricultural production practices, increasing trade and international market access, maximising economic opportunities for Australia's First Nations peoples and helping our producers become more productive, profitable and resilient.

As a department, we deliver world-class work in areas such as agricultural economics, plant and animal sciences, and use digital technology to deliver better regulatory outcomes. We help keep Australians safe through effective biosecurity. Each day, we protect our industries, communities and natural environment from potentially devastating pests and diseases. We support every clean, safe meal that Australians sit down to enjoy.

Our work touches the lives of all Australians, particularly those living in regional and rural areas.

Our Executive

The Executive Team includes the Acting Secretary, Justine Saunders APM, and four Deputy Secretaries:

- Tina Hutchison, Deputy Secretary, Agricultural Trade and Regulation Group
- Matt Lowe, Deputy Secretary, Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Policy Group
- Christie Sawczuk, Acting Deputy Secretary, Biosecurity Operations and Compliance Group
- Tess Bishop, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Enterprise and Engagement Group

SES in DAFF

Senior Executive Service (SES) at DAFF play a vital role in shaping Australia's future. They lead strategic initiatives, guide policy and program delivery, and help drive innovation across the agriculture, fisheries, and forestry sectors.

SES roles offer the opportunity to make a real impact – working across government to deliver outcomes that matter to communities and industries nationwide. SES employees are expected to model and promote the [Australian Public Service \(APS\) Values and Code of Conduct](#) and demonstrate leadership behaviours outlined in the [APS Commission's Integrated Leadership System](#) and the [Secretaries' Charter of Leadership Behaviours](#).

As an SES leader at DAFF, you'll be part of a team that values integrity, collaboration, and excellence. You'll help build a stronger, more sustainable Australia – one decision at a time.

To learn more about the SES and leadership in the APS, visit the [APSC website](#).

Why YOU are important to us and what impact will you have on the Legal Division and the department's goal.

The **Legal Division** delivers all legal services and advice required by the department, including to develop its legislation, perform its functions and deliver its regulatory and policy objectives. This includes the provision of strategic advice to the Secretary, the Executive, and the business areas within the department. The Division operates in a fast-paced, exciting environment dealing with numerous complex pieces of legislation. We facilitate excellent legal outcomes for our clients and focus on ensuring our staff are supported and developed so that they are in the best position to take on the challenges of the work.

The Division is responsible for all legal services and advice required by the department, including:

- Litigation and claims resolution
- Contracts and grants advice
- Commercial and corporate law
- Statutory interpretation
- Employment law
- Regulatory law
- Legislative development
- Legal policy and legal training
- Information law
- Debt recovery

This is where you play an important role.

As the Chief Counsel, you will lead the department's legal function, providing independent, strategic, and high-quality legal advice to the Secretary, senior executives, and portfolio Ministers. Your leadership will ensure that legal risks are appropriately managed across the department, and that the department is supported in navigating complex legal landscapes. You will guide the development and delivery of legal strategies in an agile and evolving environment, considering both the immediate and long-term needs of the department and the whole-of-government perspective.

The responsibilities of the role include:

- Supporting portfolio Ministers, the Secretary, and the Senior Executive Service to manage legal risk
- Providing legal advice to the Secretary and Minister
- Leading a team that delivers independent, high quality, timely and practical legal advice that contributes to department outcomes and appropriately manages legal risk
- Managing the department's litigation, including administrative law litigation, commercial disputes, work health and safety matters and claims of negligence in a range of Courts and Tribunals
- Managing the department's Freedom of Information, CDDA and Privacy work in accordance with the law
- Leading and managing the Legal and Governance Division's budget
- Being an informed purchaser of legal services on behalf of the department and managing external legal service providers
- Developing and maintaining co-operative working relationships with senior internal and external stakeholders
- Complying with the General Counsel Charter and Statement of expectations of Australian Government lawyers
- Promoting organisational objectives, ethics, and values in the delivery of high quality, timely legal services

Mandatory Requirements

- The department requires the successful candidate to obtain and maintain a Negative Vetting Level 2 security clearance.
- You are required to hold a degree in Law, be admitted as a legal practitioner in an Australian court and be eligible to hold an unrestricted legal practising certificate.

Who we are looking for

To be successful in the role you will need to meet the Senior Executive Service capability for the SES Band 2 level, and you will have the following:

- Proven experience providing high-level strategic legal advice and support, influencing senior leadership, and aligning legal strategies with both departmental and whole-of-government objectives
- Exceptional ability to navigate ambiguity and provide clear guidance in complex and uncertain scenarios. A demonstrated capacity to work effectively when clear-cut answers are not available
- Ability to drive broad transformational change, both internal and external to the department
- Outstanding leadership skills, a substantial record of achievement and a reputation for innovation, integrity and delivery of results
- Excellent stakeholder relationship skills and experience in engaging with internal and external stakeholders at all levels to explore opportunities and solve complex problems
- Demonstrating a strategic perspective and ability to manage competing demands and work to tight deadlines
- Highly developed management and stakeholder engagement skills and ability to represent the department at a range of forums
- Ability to communicate effectively with all audiences, be articulate and persuasive and capable of guiding negotiations to a point of resolution in a facilitative way
- Demonstrated public service professionalism and probity

What we offer you

 Your work life harmony - Opportunity for flexible work - Healthy working hours - Generous leave provisions - Stability and security to live your best life	 Your wellbeing - Dedicated 'thriving minds' hub focused on developing and implementing initiatives to support your mental health - Access to holistic wellbeing support through our Employee Assistance Program
 Your development - Access to tuition assistance and leave to fund and support your study - Drive your own development with access to endless learning and development opportunities tailored for you - Explore job opportunities across Australia with offices in regional and major cities	 Your inclusion - Access to employee diversity and inclusion networks - Impactful diversity and inclusion initiatives support our mature DE&I agenda - Ceremonial leave and dedicated Indigenous Liaison Officers to provide cultural support for our First Nations staff - Our dedicated Disability Contact Officer supports our people with disability and neurodivergence

How to apply



Prepare your application by updating your CV and the requested assessment task below. Both documents should demonstrate how you fit the “Who we are looking for” section and provide examples that align with duties listed in “The Role”



Upload your CV as a part of the application. Applications will only be accepted via the online system.



Applicants will be assessed and compared fairly against the requirements of the role.

Shortlisted candidates may then be invited to participate in a further assessment process such as Interview, work sample test etc.



Applicants will be notified of the outcome and advised of next steps if applicable.

Applications must be submitted online through our Online Recruitment System located at [DAFFs Job webpage](#).

Your application will need to include:

Statement of claims

Applicants are required to submit a statement of claims (**750 words maximum**) outlining why you are interested in this position and why you believe that you have the skills, capabilities, knowledge and experience to be considered for this role. Please provide examples which demonstrate your ability to perform the duties of the position.

Candidates are encouraged to view the Australian Public Service Commission [Integrated Leadership System \(ILS\) SES Band 2 profile](#) when preparing their application.

- Your current Resume/CV
- An explanation of how your skills, knowledge and experience will be relevant to this role (limit your total response to 750 words).
- Details of two referees (one being your current supervisor)

Application period

Opening Date	Wednesday, 5 November 2025
Closing Date	11:00 pm (AEDT), Sunday, 23 November 2025

Diversity and inclusion

The Department is committed to workforce diversity and applicants who are First Nations, come from a diverse cultural or linguistic background or have a disability are encouraged to apply.

The sharing of personal and sensitive information for diversity purposes is voluntary. Providing this important information assists the department to measure the effectiveness of our diversity and inclusion policies to attract and recruit people who represent a cross-section of the Australian population's diversity.

RecruitAbility applies to this vacancy. Under the RecruitAbility scheme you will be invited to participate in further assessment activity for the vacancy if you choose to apply under the scheme; declare you have a disability; and meet the minimum requirements for the job. For more information visit: <https://www.apsc.gov.au/recruitability>.