

Position Description

Chief Legal Counsel

This position description is designed to give an overview of the type of work and performance required for this role and may include other duties as required.

Who We Are

The Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand (CAA) is the country's aviation safety and security regulator. We are a Public Service Crown entity responsible through our Board to the Minister of Transport. We regulate a wide range of aviation activities, from commercial airlines to private pilots, ensuring that all aspects of the industry meet the highest standards of safety and security. Our important work not only saves lives but also facilitates travel, recreation, commerce, and protects the environment. By ensuring a safe and secure aviation system, we provide confidence and safeguard the reputation of New Zealand, benefiting our country as a whole.

Our Vision and Purpose

Everything we do is related towards the achievement of 'a safe and secure aviation system – so people are safe and feel safe when they fly'.

Our Pathways

We have three pathways that lead us to delivering our vision and purpose:

1. Leadership and Influence

Through regulatory leadership we influence a safe and secure civil aviation system for New Zealand.

2. Active Regulatory Stewardship

We monitor and care for the civil aviation regulatory system through our policy and operational responsibilities.

3. Professional Regulatory Practice

We act to identify risk and reduce it through intelligence-led intervention.

Our Values

Our organisation's Values support how we work to keep New Zealand skies safe and secure.

Collaboration - *Me mahi tahi*

We work together to achieve and succeed

Transparency - *Me mahi pono*

We are open and honest communicators

Integrity - *Me mahi tika*

We do the right thing

Respect - *Me manaaki*

We treat all people with consideration and kindness

Professionalism - *Kia tu rangatira ai*

We act in a way that brings credit to ourselves and our organisation



These feathers symbolise our Values, which are inspired by the sacred huia bird – a revered symbol of friendship, respect, leadership and mana.

Each feather in the Values has a different hue to reflect different aspects of the diversity, leadership, talent and experience our people bring to their work every day.

Our Values are us – we are many cultures, languages, genders, unique personalities and perspectives working together to achieve our Vision and Purpose.



Role Purpose

The Chief Legal Counsel is as member of the Regulatory Enablement and Response Leadership Team, alongside the other leaders within this group, responsible for the overall leadership of the Group, ensuring it delivers its functions effectively and efficiently, maximising its impact on safe and secure skies.

The Chief Legal Counsel is accountable for leading a high-quality Legal team that provide specialist legal advice to the CAA, on all legal issues relevant to the CAA, including public, regulatory and commercial issues. The role is also accountable for providing vision and leadership for privacy initiatives across the CAA and reporting on the organisation's privacy performance to the Executive Leadership Team as Privacy Officer.

The Chief Legal Counsel will act as a strategic advisor and partner to enable CAA to make decisions that advance our strategic priorities and have the impact of strengthening safety and security, enabling innovation and delivering efficiency and value. To that extent, the Chief Legal Advisor is expected to work across CAA, the public service and with the aviation sector. This includes playing an active role, when required, to ensure identified issues are addressed and embedded.

Key Dimensions

Group:	Regulatory Enablement and Response	
Team:	Legal	
Reports to:	Deputy Chief Executive, Regulatory Enablement and Response	
Location:	National Office, Wellington	
Salary Band:	Band 20	
Financial:	Yes	Delegation Level = Tier 3
People:	Team – 10, Direct reports 5-7	Delegation Level = Tier 3
Organisational Delegations:	Obtain and hold competence to undertake delegated functions or powers and exercise them correctly and responsibly as outlined within the 'Instrument of Delegation' document.	
Key Relationships:	Internal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director/Chief Executive and Board Executive Leadership Team Regulatory Enablement and Response Group CAA Business Groups 	External: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crown Law Office and external counsel Ministry of Transport and other government agencies Regulators and enforcement partners Courts, tribunals, and oversight bodies
Essential requirement/s:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admitted as a barrister and solicitor in New Zealand with a current practising certificate Security clearance 	



Shared Accountabilities

- We work professionally, aligned with our Values, Code of Conduct and guiding CAA policies.
- We foster a safe, inclusive culture by respecting and embracing the diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds of all.
- We ensure our work is aligned to our strategy, vision and purpose in our approach to delivering intelligence led, risk-based safety and security outcomes.
- We work together to create an environment that keeps ourselves and others safe and by following the responsibilities laid out in our Health, Safety and Wellbeing Commitment Statement which outlines the expectations of leaders and all staff.
- As leaders, we are accountable for building trust, fostering growth, and empowering teams. We create environments that prioritise well-being, collaboration, and performance, ensuring our people feel valued and supported. We bring to life the CAA's leadership expectations which are designed to empower teams to succeed and deliver on the organisational outcomes.

Key Accountabilities

Leadership of the RER Group

- Contribute as a member of the Regulatory Enablement and Response Leadership Team to the collective leadership, strategic direction, performance, and culture of the Group.
- Work collaboratively across the Group (and the rest of the organisation) to support integrated planning, prioritisation, resource stewardship, and the delivery of consistent, risk-based regulatory activities and outcomes.
- Model enterprise leadership by contributing to Group-wide decision-making, leading beyond the legal function, and supporting continuous improvement across Regulatory Enablement and Response.

Strategic Legal Leadership

- Provide authoritative legal advice to the Director/Chief Executive, Board, ELT and senior leaders on complex and high-risk matters
- Contribute to organisational strategy and decision-making as a trusted advisor
- Shape legal strategy to support CAA's regulatory responsibilities and aviation system outcomes
- Ensure legal considerations are embedded in policy, operational and regulatory decision-making

Leadership of the Legal Function

- Lead and develop a high-performing, integrated Legal Services Unit
- Set clear direction, standards, and expectations for legal practice within the CAA
- Ensure effective allocation of work and consistent quality of advice across legal domains
- Build capability, succession depth and resilience within the legal function

Legal Risk and Assurance

- Lead the identification, management and mitigation of legal risk across the CAA



- Ensure compliance with legislation including the Civil Aviation Act, HSWA, Privacy Act, Public Service obligations, and other relevant frameworks
- Provide legal assurance over significant regulatory decisions, enforcement actions, and statutory functions
- Maintain oversight of judicial review risk, litigation exposure, and reputational risk

Privacy and Information Governance

- Act as the CAA's Privacy Officer (or oversee the function), providing leadership and assurance on privacy, information governance, and data protection obligations
- Ensure compliance with the Privacy Act 2020, including effective management of privacy risks, breaches, and reporting obligations to the Privacy Commissioner
- Provide oversight of privacy frameworks, policies, and processes to ensure consistent and compliant management of personal information across the CAA
- Promote a strong organisational privacy culture through guidance, training, and support to staff

Regulatory and Enforcement Legal Support

- Lead legal support for regulatory and enforcement matters, ensuring sound legal advice and effective management of legal risk.

External Counsel and Litigation Management

- Lead the management of external counsel and significant litigation matters, ensuring effective oversight and strong external relationships.

Policy, Legislation and Regulatory Stewardship

- Provide legal leadership on policy, legislation, and regulatory stewardship, supporting sound legal advice and management of emerging legal and regulatory risk.

Governance, Integrity and Accountability

- Act as (or oversee) key statutory and functional roles such as:
 - Chief Privacy Officer
 - Legal input to OIA and Ombudsman processes
 - Conflicts of interest and delegations framework
- Ensure strong governance practices, legal integrity, and transparency
- Support the Board and ELT with governance-related legal advice



Competencies

Get Smart – Knowledge & Context: Level 3 ***

Understands the role of the CAA within the aviation sector, and has a holistic understanding of the regulatory environment, the structure and interrelated operating practices of the CAA. Follows the guidance and processes expected of all CAA employees as a modern, adaptive regulator, set out in policies, legislation, aviation rules and other internal documents.

Think Smart – Sound Judgement: Level 3 ***

Makes appropriate and transparent decisions by analysing relevant information, takes into consideration different points of view, demonstrating the ability to make difficult and/or sensitive decisions. Has flexibility to both adopt a course of action and change it when required by the situation.

Work Smart – Achieves Results: Level 3 ***

Drives change and results through effective planning, collaboration, and communication. Builds trust, fosters teamwork, and demonstrates self-awareness to achieve shared goals and continuous improvement.

Act Smart – Personal Effectiveness: Level 3 ***

Is adaptable and resilient to meet changing needs and expectations. Displays self-awareness and is respectful of diversity. Takes responsibility for self-learning and development. Demonstrates behaviours consistent with the Code of Conduct and CAA Values.

Lead Smart – Focus On Our People: Level 3 ***

Effective leadership is about building trust, fostering growth, and empowering teams to succeed. Leaders create environments that promote well-being, collaboration, and high performance by balancing care and challenge. At every stage, they prioritise people and ensure individuals feel valued.

Skills and Experience

Core Skills and Capabilities

Area

Strategic and Systems Thinking	Ability to operate at enterprise level, linking legal advice to organisational strategy, regulatory outcomes, and system performance. Strong conceptual thinking, able to navigate complexity and ambiguity and provide clear direction.
Legal Judgement and Risk Management	Highly developed legal judgement, with the ability to balance technical accuracy with pragmatic, risk-based decision making. Ability to identify, assess, and clearly articulate legal risk in a way that enables confident decision making.
Influence and Communication	Exceptional interpersonal and influencing skills, with credibility at Board and ELT level. Ability to translate complex legal issues into clear, accessible, and actionable advice. Strong written and verbal communication skills, including experience in high-profile or sensitive environments.
Leadership and People Capability	Proven ability to lead, coach, and develop high-performing professional teams. Ability to build an integrated, collaborative legal function that partners effectively across the organisation. Leads with integrity, professionalism, and a strong service orientation.



Commercial and Operational Acumen	Sound commercial judgement, with the ability to support organisational performance while managing legal risk. Understanding of operational environments and the ability to provide advice that is practical, timely, and implementable.
Public Sector and Regulatory Insight	Strong understanding of regulatory stewardship, enforcement frameworks, and statutory decision making. Appreciation of public sector expectations, including political neutrality, transparency, and accountability.
Privacy and Information Governance	Demonstrated experience in privacy and information governance, including application of the Privacy Act 2020, management of privacy risk and breaches, and engagement with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (advantageous).

Experience

Type	Experience / Qualification	Requirement
Essential	Qualification	LLB or equivalent legal qualification.
Essential	Senior legal leadership in complex environments	Significant experience leading legal functions in government, regulatory, or similarly complex settings (7+years PQE)
Essential	Executive and governance advisory experience	Experience advising Chief Executives, Boards, and senior leaders on complex, high-risk, or strategically significant matters.
Essential	Public law, regulatory and risk expertise	Strong experience in public law, regulatory frameworks, enforcement, administrative decision making, litigation, and managing significant legal and reputational risk.
Essential	Strategic and people leadership	Proven ability to influence organisational decision making through pragmatic legal advice and to lead and develop high-performing legal teams.
Desirable	Commercial and in-house legal experience	Experience in in-house, corporate, or general counsel roles, including commercial, procurement, contract, and operational legal matters.
Desirable	Sector and regulatory framework experience	Experience in aviation, transport, infrastructure, or other safety-critical sectors, including enforcement, prosecution, and evidential decision making.
Desirable	Policy, government and stewardship experience	Experience contributing to policy development, legislative reform, regulatory stewardship, and working with Ministers, central agencies, or cross-government processes.
Desirable	Change, litigation and broader legal environment experience	Experience leading organisational change, managing external counsel or significant litigation, and/or working across international or cross-jurisdictional contexts.

