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COMMUNITY SERVICES PROJECT PROFESSIONAL / NB POC / CAPRICORN

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Statement of Claims: Family Violence Justice Project Worker

Introduction

I am writing to express my interest in the Family Violence Justice Project Worker position at Flat Out. As a queer, non-binary person of colour with lived experience navigating the criminal justice system, I am passionate about Flat Out's commitment to social justice and its work to support women, trans, and gender-diverse people impacted by criminalisation. I believe my diverse background, skills, and experience working in community services make me a strong candidate for this role.

Key Selection Criteria

1. Knowledge and understanding of the drivers of women, trans and gender-diverse people's incarceration and post-release issues.

My lived experience has, with the benefit of hindsight, opened my eyes to the drivers of incarceration and how intersectionality can compound the challenges of navigating the criminal justice system

I've faced financial and housing insecurity, poverty, homelessness, mental illness, psychological distress, and harm from AOD (Alcohol and Other Drugs) issues. These challenges manifested into criminal issues that led to my involvement with the criminal justice system. Navigating these systemic issues and the criminal justice system was a complex and challenging task. I was fortunate enough to be in a position to generate the funds for competent, private legal representation. This was supplemented by the support of a close friend who works for Victorian Legal Aid. As a result, I was able to adequately prepare for my court hearing, submitting 39 pieces of evidence to support my case. This lived experience has given me an intimate understanding of the challenges faced by marginalised communities, particularly trans and gender-diverse people. While my experience is not directly comparable to that of a trans woman, there are important parallels.

In addition to my lived experience, my professional work at Diamond Valley Community Support has further deepened my understanding of the drivers of incarceration and post-release issues faced by women, trans, and gender-diverse people. I have witnessed firsthand the systemic barriers that perpetuate cycles of disadvantage, including discrimination, stigma, and lack of access to support services. For example, I worked with a client who was released from prison after serving a sentence for drug-related offences. She struggled to find stable housing and employment due to her criminal record, which led to her re-offending and returning to prison. This experience highlighted the need for comprehensive support services for people exiting the criminal justice system, including assistance with housing, employment, and mental health care.

My profound commitment to social justice and intersectional feminist principles is deeply ingrained in my lived experience as a queer, non-binary, neurodivergent person of color with a disability, as well as my professional endeavors. This personal experience of intersectional discrimination and disadvantage has provided me with a deep understanding of the multifaceted ways in which racism, colonization, and white supremacy intersect with

other forms of oppression to generate unique challenges for marginalized communities. I am dedicated to fostering safe and inclusive environments for all individuals, irrespective of their background or identity.

My educational journey has been pivotal in shaping my understanding of social justice. While my formal qualifications include a Bachelor's in Business and a Master's in Finance, it was during my TAFE community services diploma that I gained the most impactful insights. The curriculum, particularly the Sociology classes, provided me with stark statistical evidence that underscored the profound injustices inflicted upon First Nations people due to settler invasion, occupation, and cultural decimation—realities I was already acutely aware of due to my heritage and lived experience. The disproportionate incarceration rates and biased policing practices against First Nations people were particularly jarring, solidifying my resolve to challenge systemic oppression.

During my tenure at NAB, I was instrumental in the development and implementation of a comprehensive training program designed to equip staff with the skills and knowledge necessary to identify and prevent the financial exploitation of vulnerable customers. This program included modules on recognizing the warning signs of financial abuse, understanding the psychological and social factors that contribute to vulnerability, and developing strategies for intervening effectively and sensitively. By providing staff with these essential tools, the program aimed to empower them to take proactive steps to protect customers from harm and ensure their financial well-being.

In my role as a SMART Recovery meeting facilitator for the Re-Wired program at Thorne Harbour Health, I facilitated fortnightly meetings for queer men, fostering a safe and supportive space for open and honest discussion. These meetings covered a wide range of topics relevant to the lived experiences of queer men, including lapses and relapses, sleep hygiene, nutrition, HIV prevention and management, sexual health, mental health, and mindfulness practices. Recognizing that each participant had unique needs and learning styles, I adapted my facilitation approach accordingly, ensuring that everyone felt included and valued. This commitment to inclusivity and individualized support created a welcoming environment where participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences and learning from one another.

4. Demonstrated experience working in complex service systems particularly (but not limited to) family violence, homelessness, drug and alcohol, and mental health, and ability to identify barriers, opportunities and solutions.

During my time at Diamond Valley Community Support, I worked with a client, let's call him Alex, who was experiencing multiple complex issues, including intimate partner family violence, homelessness, and AOD dependency. Alex identified as LGBTQIA+ and was struggling to access appropriate support services due to a lack of understanding and awareness of the specific needs of queer individuals experiencing family violence. Standard services were not helpful, and he was facing significant barriers to escaping the violence and finding safe housing.

Recognizing the urgency of his situation, I took the initiative to research options specifically tailored to the needs of queer people experiencing family violence. I identified a potential housing solution through Queerspace, a specialised program offering safe and inclusive accommodation for LGBTQIA+ individuals. I advocated for Alex to be prioritised for this program, and as a result, he was able to escape the violence and secure short-term accommodation in a hotel while a more permanent housing option was arranged through Queerspace.

This example, and my experience in my role at NAB, demonstrates my ability to:

- **Identify barriers and opportunities:** I recognized the unique challenges faced by Alex as an LGBTQIA+ individual experiencing family violence and the lack of appropriate support from standard services.
- **Develop solutions:** I took the initiative to research and identify a specialized housing program tailored to the needs of queer people.
- **Achieve positive outcomes:** My advocacy and resourcefulness resulted in Alex escaping the violence and securing safe and inclusive accommodation.

5. Ability to build relationships and networks and work collaboratively to drive change.

I have a proven track record of building and maintaining strong professional relationships. Through effective communication and a genuine interest in collaboration, I've consistently fostered cross-functional teamwork and successfully aligned diverse perspectives to achieve common goals and deliver impactful solutions.

For instance, during my time at RBS in the UK, I spearheaded a proactive response to an impending government warning about new regulations concerning tax avoidance reporting. Recognizing the need for internal change, I facilitated open communication across senior management levels, fostering a collaborative environment that resulted in the implementation of a new ethics-focused policy. This policy effectively prepared RBS's bankers for their new responsibilities, ensuring the bank's compliance ahead of the regulatory changes.

This experience demonstrates my ability to build strong professional networks, collaborate effectively across all levels of an organization, and proactively drive organizational change.

6. Excellent communication skills, including the ability to write reports and create document guides.

Throughout my 9+ years in the finance industry, I have honed strong communication skills, particularly in writing reports and developing comprehensive guides. Documenting analysis and findings was a key component of every project I undertook.

For example, at Independent Television News (ITN), I developed a documentation guide for a new finance system. This involved conducting thorough research, interviewing key stakeholders at Integra (the software provider), and organizing the information into a clear, step-by-step guide with visual aids. The guide was well-received by both the finance team and my managers.

Additionally, at Headspace, I produced a research report based on focus group findings and thematic analysis. The report included recommendations for the board and outlined next steps. This demonstrates my ability to synthesize complex information and present it in a clear and accessible format for various audiences.

These experiences highlight my ability to:

- Conduct thorough research, gathering and analyzing information from various sources to ensure accuracy and completeness.
- Communicate effectively in writing, producing clear, concise, and well-organized documents that meet the needs of different audiences.
- Present information in a user-friendly format, using visual aids and other techniques to make complex information easy to understand.

7. Strong organisational and project management skills, including data collection and evaluation, and ability to prioritise tasks and meet deadlines.

My nine years of experience in the finance industry have allowed me to develop and refine my organizational and project management skills. These have been essential to my success as a business analyst, where I have become proficient in data collection and evaluation to inform project planning and execution. I am adept at prioritization and meeting deadlines, even when faced with demanding schedules and high-pressure environments.

Data Collection and Evaluation:

At Headspace, I conducted a thematic analysis of focus group participant responses regarding their mental health support experiences while studying in Australia. This involved transcribing focus group discussions, coding participant responses, and identifying patterns and themes. Detailed reports were prepared for senior executives and a plain language version was published online for the broader public.

Prioritization and Deadlines:

In my project management roles at Coutts and RBS, I was responsible for task prioritization and status reporting. This included the development of detailed project plans which outlined requirements, milestones, responsibilities, dependencies, and risks. Weekly project status updates and supporting reports were provided to executives using the bank's project delivery software, which was similar to Microsoft Project. At Headspace I used Asana to define tasks and prioritize project requirements.

8. Ability to work autonomously and as part of a team, with demonstrated experience working in an accountable, collaborative, professional, and respectful manner.

My professional trajectory has cultivated a robust capacity for both independent initiative and collaborative teamwork. My tenure at NAB as a Project Analyst, in particular, has deeply ingrained the core principles of accountability, collaboration, professionalism, and respect within the workplace ethos.

The Bank of the Future Program necessitated a harmonious balance between autonomous execution and close team synergy. Over a six-month period, I undertook weekly travel to Tasmania, functioning with considerable autonomy at pilot sites in Hobart, Launceston, and Burnie. In these environments, I exhibited proactive initiative and adaptability, providing on-site support to banking personnel.

Upon returning to the head office, I seamlessly rejoined the collaborative team dynamic, working in close conjunction with the Project Manager and colleagues to address technical complexities and achieve project objectives. This experience served to fortify my communication acumen, commitment to transparency, and proactive risk mitigation strategies.

I am a conscientious and collaborative individual, valuing open channels of communication and adept problem-solving. I consistently uphold standards of respect and professionalism, maintaining a high caliber of work output.

9. Competency in using Windows software and Excel applications and capacity to maintain appropriate records and files.

I am highly proficient in using the full suite of Microsoft Office programs and can quickly adapt to new software as needed. Throughout my seven years of experience in project management, my computer skills have been essential for producing and editing a wide array of planning documents, presentations, and spreadsheets.

During my time at Coutts & Co, I honed my skills in using various Windows software and applications to facilitate meetings, including preparing agendas, recording minutes, and creating and presenting PowerPoint slides. Additionally, I ensured that all project documentation adhered to company standards.

My role at NAB required extensive use of Excel for data analysis, reporting, and financial modelling, where I developed expertise in building complex spreadsheets, utilizing formulas and functions, and presenting data clearly and concisely.

I am committed to maintaining accurate and well-organized records, both physical and digital, and I consistently demonstrate strong data management skills while ensuring confidentiality.

Conclusion

I am confident that I have the skills, experience, and commitment to excel in this role and contribute to Flat Out's important work. I am eager to join a dedicated team and make a meaningful difference in the lives of women, trans, and gender-diverse people impacted by family violence and criminalisation.
