



ROLE DESCRIPTION: Graduate Researcher

Full Time: 40 hours per week

Reports to: Director, Research and Legal

Direct reports: None

Location: Wellington – based in the Wellington office

Duration: Permanent

Date created: February 2026

About ELI

The Environmental Law Initiative (ELI) is a charitable trust that aims to make a positive difference to the environment through the application and improvement of environmental laws. ELI uses both litigation and advocacy to meet these aims. ELI works across a range of environmental domains, including oceans and coasts, freshwater, biodiversity and conservation, climate change, and environmental pollution.

Our values are:

- **Impact** – we make a difference
- **Excellence** – we deliver results
- **Integrity** – we hold ourselves to account
- **Relevant** – we keep up with the play
- **Partnership** – we are stronger because we work together

Role purpose

The role is responsible for conducting research and advocacy and contributing to litigation with the aim of furthering the ELI strategy – to improve environmental laws in Aotearoa New Zealand and to ensure that existing laws are implemented and enforced.

Responsibilities

The role responsibilities are:

Research and advocacy

- Work with the ELI team to develop and deliver projects that will lead to opportunities for litigation and advocacy, and the achievement of ELI strategic goals
- Conduct independent and collaborative research into identified topics (encompassing factual, legal and scientific research as appropriate)
- Capture and share research findings in appropriate ways, including internal and external reports, articles, letters and presentations.
- Work with ELI communications team and the media to deliver key messages to advance ELI projects and overall strategy
- Build high levels of sector knowledge, to enable the development of relevant and timely projects
- Provide submissions on Government consultations, select committee processes, resource management processes and other avenues to advocate for the environment, as appropriate.

Litigation

- Use research and sector knowledge to develop recommendations for litigation
- Work with ELI team members and external lawyers on the development of statements of claim
- Work with ELI team members, external lawyers and experts to prepare and file evidence in support of litigation
- Work with ELI team members and external lawyers on document discovery and the review of other court documents, as appropriate
- Manage/contribute to management of litigation projects, including budget management

Stakeholder engagement

- Engage and work collaboratively with other environmental NGOs, local and central government, iwi, research organisations and independent experts, external lawyers, the wider environment sector and other organisations, where appropriate.
- Build and maintain networks in relevant sectors

Reporting

- Provide monthly reports of individual and project activities
- Assist, when necessary, with annual reporting requirements

Team Culture

- Incorporate Te Tiriti o Waitangi within day-to-day work and long-term planning
- Be a sounding board and critical friend for other team members
- Contribute to the development and embedding of team values

Other

- The Environmental Law Initiative has a diligent delivery culture, which may require some out of hours work at times
- This role may involve travel within New Zealand
- Any other reasonable duties as required.

Due to the dynamic nature of our work, our partners and funding, the tasks and responsibilities noted in this role description may well change from time to time, to meet the needs of the organisation. Any 'material' changes will be mutually agreed between the parties and noted in writing.

About you

Knowledge and Experience

- A recent (within the past 2 years from the date of this role description) University graduate with a minimum of an LLB
- Some legal research experience
- Some knowledge of New Zealand environmental law
- Some experience of working in a small team
- Some experience of environmental advocacy or science (preferable)

Skills and Attributes

- Excellent research and fact finding skills
- Entrepreneurial
- Ability to work effectively with multiple sources of information
- Ability to develop and maintain contacts and networks
- Strong critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills
- Excellent writing skills
- High levels of initiative
- High levels of integrity
- Results focussed
- Quick thinking
- Team player
- Adaptable and flexible