



VICTORIAN BAR

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



LANDMARKS

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- 1884:** Victorian Bar established
 - 1904:** First barrister of Chinese descent William Ah Ket
 - 1926:** Second woman barrister, Beatrice McCay, who practised until her marriage
 - 1968:** Only eight women had signed the Bar Roll
 - 1981:** First indigenous barrister, Prof Mick Dodson AM
 - 1996:** Victorian Bar Parental Leave Policy implemented
 - 1997:** First woman appointed to the Court of Appeal, the Hon. Susan Kenny QC
 - 2003:** First woman appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Hon. Marilyn Warren AC QC
 - 2007:** Indigenous Clerkship Program commences
 - 2013:** Victorian Bar Equality Project, 'The Quantum Leap' launched
 - 2016:** National Diversity and Equality Charter adopted
 - 2018:** New policies on discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying adopted
 - 1900:** First Bar Council established
 - 1923:** First woman barrister, Joan Rosanove
 - 1965:** First woman silk, Joan Rosanove QC
 - 1976:** First Victorian woman appointed to Family Court, the Hon. Margaret Lusink AM
 - 1993:** First woman chairman of the Victorian Bar Council, the Hon. Susan Crennan AC QC
 - 1996:** First woman appointed to the Supreme Court of Victoria, the Hon. Rosemary Balmford AM
 - 1998:** Victorian Bar landmark report *Equality of Opportunity for Women at the Victorian Bar*
 - 2004:** Victorian Bar's first Equality of Opportunity Briefing Policy commences
 - 2012:** Victorian Bar's first Reconciliation Action Plan adopted
 - 2015:** Bar Council supported marriage equality for LGBTI Australians
 - 2017:** National Equitable Briefing Policy adopted

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

The Victorian Bar is an association of proudly independent, fearless advocates, committed to principles of justice, integrity, equity and the pursuit of excellence. We believe in the right of all persons to access high quality legal representation, whatever their background or personal circumstances, race, gender, sexuality, gender identity, disabilities or beliefs. And we believe that the Victorian Bar must be a diverse, inclusive and welcoming place for all members and visitors.

These are our values.

The Bar's vision of independence, excellence, leadership, and growth demands equality at all levels. With a foundation of equality, the skills and talent of all our members can be fostered in a collegiate culture where the unique competencies of a diverse membership are developed and expanded.

The Hon. Stephen Charles AO QC wrote in his Foreword to the Victorian Bar's landmark report, *Equality of Opportunity for Women at the Victorian Bar* in 1998:

“

The Bar has always claimed to stand for a series of ideals, amongst the most important of which is a willingness to defend and support fairness and justice for all – which must surely include its own members. And it would be quite wrong for those who contemplate coming to the Bar to be dissuaded from doing so by the fear that the Bar itself maintains gender bias, or that bodies such as the Bar Council might not do everything possible to eradicate discriminatory practices.

”

This statement, while particularly directed at women, remains as true, and relevant, today as it was in 1998. The Bar Council's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all members remains steadfast.

In this brochure, you will find information about who we are and how we deliver on our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Dr Matt Collins QC
President

Sarah Fregon
Chief Executive Officer



VICTORIAN BAR

GENDER AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY AT THE VICTORIAN BAR

There is a higher proportion of women at the Victorian Bar than any other independent Bar in Australia, by a considerable margin. Our Bar has seen a six-fold increase in the proportion of women since 1980. With women representing over 40% of all barristers under 15 years' seniority, it is inevitable that this trend will continue and that the proportion of women at the Bar will continue to increase.



Women now comprise 29% of Victorian barristers compared to 5.5% in 1980



Women now represent one-in-three junior barristers



40% of barristers under 15 years' call are women

Source: Bar Roll data

The Victorian Bar is also increasingly culturally diverse. Our membership reflects the community we serve.



9%

Speak a language other than English at home and over 37 languages are spoken



37%

Had at least one parent born overseas



15%

Were born overseas in more than 30 countries



1.2%

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage compared with 0.8% of the Victorian population

Source: Case for change data 2016-17

ACTIONS AND INITIATIVES

The Victorian Bar has a number of Committees and Bar Associations with the core purpose of supporting human rights, equality, diversity and inclusion. These include our Human Rights Committee, Equality & Diversity Committee, Indigenous Justice Committee, Women Barristers Association and LGBTI Working Group. Information about the activities of each of these groups is available on the Victorian Bar website.

GENDER EQUALITY

A range of policies and practical initiatives have been developed through the work of the Bar Council including our [Parental Leave Policy](#), Unconscious Bias training, Re-Engagement Roundtables to support and encourage women back to the Bar after parental leave, and exit surveys for women leaving the Bar, in order to better understand the drivers of attrition.

The Victorian Bar also endorses and actively promotes the [Law Council of Australia's National Model Gender Equitable Briefing Policy](#) and is a signatory to the [National Diversity and Equality Charter](#). The Bar exceeded its 2020 target for equitable briefing in 2017.

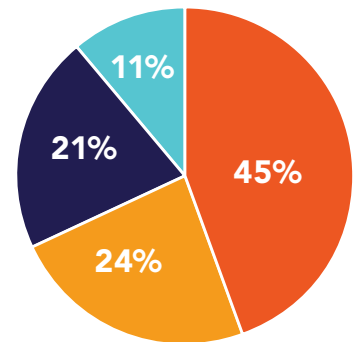
The equitable briefing policy is available for adoption by all barristers. By adopting the policy, members demonstrate to their colleagues at the Bar and across the wider profession their support for the aims of the policy and, through those aims, the continued excellence of the Bar.

For both men and women surveyed, recommended briefing practices exceed equitable briefing targets.

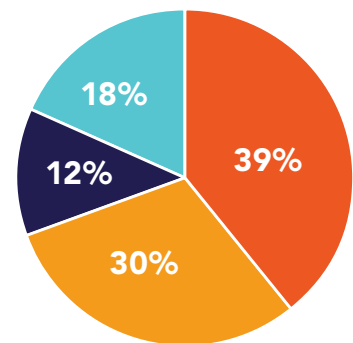
Female Junior barristers are recommended to be briefed by Victorian barristers significantly more than 30% of the time by all cohorts.

- Female junior (less than 10 years' call)
- Female senior (silk or more than 10 years' call)
- Male junior (less than 10 years' call)
- Male senior (silk or more than 10 years' call)

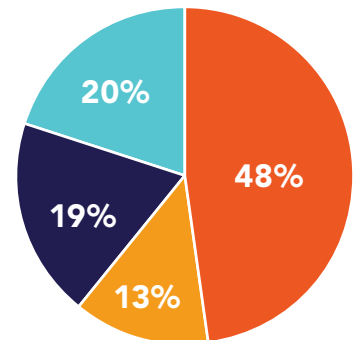
Female senior barristers' briefing recommendations



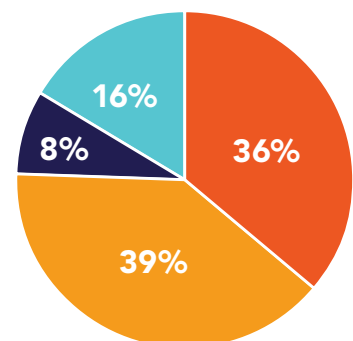
Male senior barristers' briefing recommendations



Female junior barristers' briefing recommendations



Male junior barristers' briefing recommendations



Source: Case for change data 2016-17



INDIGENOUS JUSTICE

The Victorian Bar has a number of [initiatives](#) to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to come to the Bar, and to support their careers as barristers. These include:

- Mentoring programs via the Indigenous Clerkship program
- Indigenous Law Graduates and Students Mentoring Program
- Chambers Subsidy for Indigenous Barristers
- Readers' Course Fee Waiver
- Scholarships granted by the Victorian Bar Indigenous Barristers Fund
- Victorian Bar's Reconciliation Action Plan

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

The Victorian Bar was the first Bar in Australia to adopt a [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#) in 2012. Since that time, a second RAP has been implemented for the years 2017 – 2020. The Bar actively monitors and reports on the achievement of its activities against the criteria outlined within the RAP.

We were pleased to meet our targets in respect of the first RAP, and look forward to continuing to build on the programs and projects supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at the Bar and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice. Members of the Bar have a long history of supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians through pro bono work and supporting access to justice.

The RAP is another means by which the Bar actively facilitates, encourages and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice in Victoria. The RAP is available on the Victorian Bar's website.

POLICIES

To support our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion at the Victorian Bar, the Bar Council has approved policies to promote a safe and inclusive working environment:

- [Anti-Bullying Policy](#)
- [Anti-Discrimination Policy](#)
- [Sexual Harassment Policy](#)

Each of these policies is available on the Victorian Bar website in both the Members' and Public sections of the site.

EDUCATION

The Victorian Bar educates its members on matters of diversity and inclusion through a range of continuing professional development and other seminars on topics such as:

- unconscious bias
- equitable briefing
- issues faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- cultural awareness

COMPLAINTS AND REPORTS

A range of formal and informal options are available for the reporting of grievances and the resolution of complaints. Trained Bar Conciliators are available to advise in relation to the available options. Further information is available on the [Victorian Bar website](#).





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