

## **Statement of Principles on Disability**

The Victorian Bar's Equality and Diversity Policy expresses the Bar's commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity amongst its membership. The Policy recognises that diversity is an inclusive concept that seeks to reflect within the Bar the diversity of the broader community. Doing so will ensure not only that the best lawyers are drawn to the Bar, but also that the Bar will have within its ranks a greater range of skills and experiences. This will enhance the value added by barristers to the administration of justice.

The Bar's commitment to the promotion of greater diversity amongst its membership necessarily recognises the need for the adoption of practical measures that:

- (a) promotes the Bar as an inclusive area of legal practice that can be, and is, undertaken by those with a disability.
- (b) addresses, so far as the Bar is able, barriers to practice for lawyers with a disability who wish to practice as a barrister; and
- (c) assists the Bar to itself make adjustments to the services and the environments it provides to best recognise and properly take account of the effects of disability (including for solicitors and clients).

With this in mind, the following principles are adopted for the purpose of informing the development and application of the aforementioned practical measures. These principles are:

1. People with a disability have an inherent right to respect for their human worth and dignity. This right is recognised in international and Australian law.
2. A description of disability as either physical or mental is incomplete. A person's impairment may be visible, invisible, episodic or a combination of these characteristics. In all cases, disability is experienced, and managed, differently by each individual. The effects of a disability may be experienced all or only some of the time and may vary in their impact on the affected person. Effects include attitudes and assumptions made about that person, their capabilities or what they may need that reflect negative stereotypes of and about disability.
3. Subject to the just and efficient administration of justice, an appropriate adjustment made for a barrister with a disability in order to take account of the effects of their disability is to be viewed as an ordinary and reasonable expectation of legal practice and consistent with the promotion of merit; not as special, exceptional or the conferral of a privilege.
4. People with a disability receiving services, including physical services such as chambers and other services associated with professional practice as a barrister, have the same rights as other members of Australian society to receive and access those services in a manner which is the least restrictive of their rights and opportunities.