

Strategic plan 2020-2024

The Victorian Bar

Overview

This strategic plan sets out the direction for the Victorian Bar (VicBar) over the next four years. The plan will help to shape the work of the Bar Council to achieve our vision and purpose.

The plan was developed in consultation with members and other interested parties, across the legal profession, clients, government and the judiciary.

This strategy will help to strengthen VicBar's market position in an increasingly competitive legal services market. It will support the Bar to be responsive to member feedback by delivering services that members use and value. The plan will help the Bar to attract and develop talented members to foster excellence and enhance performance. The plan will also support the Bar's efforts to draw on the expertise of members to influence policy, legislation and the justice system.

The strategy also includes a focus on the internal capabilities that will help us to deliver on our strategic objectives over the next four years. We will prioritise developing fit-for-purpose governance that promotes continuity and effective decision making and a proactive approach to data collection and performance measurement.

The plan aims to position VicBar to address the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities presented by a rapidly changing legal market, so that the Bar and its members thrive, now and into the future.

Strategic plan on-a-page

Vision	Independence, excellence, leadership, growth			
Purpose	To ensure the Bar and its members thrive, now and into the future			
Objectives	To maintain and expand market share	To provide services to members to support and enhance their practices	To foster excellence and enhance the performance of Victorian barristers	To provide leadership and a strong, authoritative voice
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of barristers' distinctive competencies among clients and the community • Actively engage with clients to position VicBar members as leading experts in the provision of legal services • Enable members to contribute to the Bar's marketing • Position VicBar to meet emerging challenges and prepare the profession for the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance professional opportunities for all our members • Listen to our members to design and deliver valuable services • Represent the interests of members • Broaden VicBar's revenue streams • Work with Barristers' Chambers Limited to ensure physical and technical infrastructure supports members' needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage professional excellence among members • Support members' ability to provide high-quality legal services on competitive terms • Maintain and enhance standards of professional conduct • Attract, retain and develop talented and diverse members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and manage strategic relationships to maintain and strengthen the Bar's independence • Work collaboratively to safeguard the rule of law • Identify strategic priorities for the provision of expert input and leadership • Improve and strengthen co-regulation • Support members to provide high quality pro bono legal advice and representation
What success looks like	Our members' share of legal expenditure increases	We are responsive to member feedback and provide services that members use and value	We attract and develop high quality barristers who thrive at the Bar	We draw on members' expertise and views to influence policy, legislation and the justice system
Core enablers	Fit-for-purpose governance that promotes continuity and effective decision making			
	Proactive data collection and performance measurement			

Our vision: *Independence, excellence, leadership, growth*

Independence – VicBar is a strong and independent group of professionals who uphold the rule of law. Our work is built on the tradition of providing fearless legal representation and advice to all in the community. We provide impartial and objective representation and advocacy. The Bar Council will work to maintain and, where possible, enhance the independence of the Bar.

Excellence – VicBar supports its members to provide legal representation and advocacy of the highest quality. We will provide members with services to develop skills, foster talent and promote a collegiate culture. The Bar Council will build the conditions to sustain high-quality performance across the Bar. We recognise that professional excellence encompasses a diverse range of styles and approaches.

Leadership – VicBar calls upon its unique blend of expertise and authority to lead and support efforts to advance the rule of law and improve access to, and the efficient administration of, justice. We will work collaboratively with other legal bodies to best support the justice system in Victoria. The Bar Council will agree areas of legal reform that are strategic priorities. It will ensure that the Bar speaks with a single, authoritative voice on these issues.

Growth – As the legal services market changes VicBar needs to adapt to embrace the opportunities this presents. VicBar will support its members to maintain and expand their practices by building awareness of barristers' distinctive competencies, developing marketing initiatives and enabling members to implement strategies and contribute to the Bar's marketing.

Our purpose: *To ensure the Bar and its members thrive now and into the future*

'To ensure the Bar and its members ...' – Our purpose is directed towards both the individual members that comprise VicBar and the Bar as an organisation. VicBar is a diverse community of independent individuals with different strategic and professional interests. The interests of members are nevertheless closely aligned, and all members will benefit if VicBar functions effectively as a member organisation.

'...thrive...' – We aim to support VicBar and its members to develop over time and to flourish in a legal environment that is rapidly changing. The term 'thrive' captures the various ways that members can develop and prosper, personally, professionally and financially.

'... now and into the future' – Our purpose emphasises the Bar's commitment to ongoing improvement and our focus on the future. We recognise the value of building on the Bar's long-standing traditions, through innovation, flexibility and embracing new ideas to address challenges and capitalise on the opportunities presented by a rapidly changing legal services market.

Objective 1 - Maintain and expand market share

To achieve this objective the Bar Council will support VicBar members and the interests of VicBar by:

Raising awareness of barristers' distinctive competencies among clients and the community, focusing on advocacy skills, independence of advice, specialist legal expertise and cost-effective provision of legal services.

Actively engaging with clients to position VicBar as leading experts in the provision of legal services, including through engaging with clients to understand clients' perceptions of barristers and the factors that influence decisions to brief barristers.

Enabling members to contribute to the Bar's marketing by building marketing and business development competency through training programs and supporting members to demonstrate the value of engaging with the Bar.

Positioning VicBar to meet emerging challenges and preparing the profession for the future, including by researching trends and aligning professional opportunities and member services to align with current and emerging trends.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE | Our members' share of legal expenditure increases

VicBar aims to address the competitive pressures facing individual barristers and the Bar by proactively developing the market for barristers' services and empowering members to contribute to these efforts. This objective is future-focussed; we are concerned both with advocacy in Court, as well as new and emerging markets where barristers' skills may be more effectively used. We will know we have been successful if economic performance of the Bar improves relative to the broader market for legal services, through greater value and/or volume of legal briefs.

We will monitor the following indicators of this outcome:

- Share of market for legal services attributable to barristers, drawing on member feedback and data from Barristers' Clerks
- Growth in new and emerging markets for barristers' services, including advice and mediation, drawing on feedback from members and clients
- Changes to client perceptions of barristers and purchasing decisions, including how early barristers are briefed on legal issues
- Change in financial performance of individual barristers over time, drawing on Bar Roll data and member feedback.

Objective 2 - Provide services to members to support and enhance their practices

To achieve this objective the Bar Council will support VicBar members and the interests of VicBar by:

Enhancing professional opportunities for all our members, including by developing briefing opportunities for barristers and supporting professional, collegiate and inclusive networks among barristers.

Listen to our members to design and deliver valuable services which best enable and support them to do their work in a high-pressured and increasingly digital environment.

Representing the interests of members, including by recognising and responding to the challenges facing the Bar and its diverse members.

Broadening revenue streams, by identifying potential opportunities for revenue growth to supplement, and lessen reliance on, member subscriptions.

Working with Barristers' Chambers Limited to ensure physical and technical infrastructure supports members' needs, including by ensuring upgrades to built environments support effective practice, involve limited disruption of barristers' work and continue to meet barristers' diverse needs.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE | We are responsive to member feedback and provide services that members use and value

We are committed to ensuring that our members have access to relevant, valuable services which support and enhance their practices. We will know we have been successful in delivering on this objective if barristers use the services that we provide and are satisfied with their quality.

We will monitor the following indicators of this outcome:

- Uptake of services by members
- Member feedback on relevance and quality of services provided by the Bar
- Responsiveness of the Bar to member feedback, in improving existing services and delivering new services
- Member feedback on culture at the Bar, including the inclusivity, collegiality, diversity and accessibility of the working environment.

Objective 3 - Foster excellence and enhance the performance of Victorian Barristers

To achieve this objective the Bar Council will support VicBar members and the interests of VicBar by:

Encouraging professional excellence among members, including by continuing our high-quality education and training programs and developing new programs to respond to areas of need or potential growth.

Supporting members' ability to provide high quality legal services on competitive terms, including by ensuring that operational systems and processes work efficiently and serve the interests of barristers and their practices.

Maintaining and enhancing standards of professional conduct, including by promoting a collegiate culture that demands ethical practice, professional excellence, and regard for the interests of clients.

Attracting, retaining and developing talented and diverse members, including by promoting the Bar as a desirable place to work, ensuring the Bar remains accessible to prospective and current members, and supporting junior barristers to access opportunities that set them up for future success.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE | We attract and develop high quality barristers who thrive at the Bar

We are committed to attracting and developing talent at the Bar and supporting our members to thrive. We will know we have been successful in this objective if talented lawyers from a range of professional and personal backgrounds continue to want to come to the Bar, and if the Bar increasingly reflects the diversity of the society that we seek to serve. We will also know that we have been successful against this objective if we provide high quality legal training and education that enables members to improve performance. Success against this objective is closely related to the economic performance of barristers over time, which is recorded under objective 1.

We will monitor the following indicators of this outcome:

- Turnover and retention rates at the Bar
- Diversity of the Bar's membership, drawing on Bar Roll data and member surveys
- Member feedback on the quality and relevance of the Bar's CPD program
- VicBar's reputation in the public domain, based on media mentions.

Objective 4 – Provide leadership and a strong, authoritative voice

To achieve this objective the Bar Council will support VicBar members and the interests of VicBar by:

Developing and maintaining strategic relationships to maintain and strengthen the Bar’s independence by recognising and responding to external challenges that could pose a threat to the institution’s core strengths.

Working collaboratively to safeguard the rule of law, as well as improving access to and the efficient administration of justice.

Identifying strategic priorities for the provision of expert input and leadership, including on law reform proposals.

Improving and strengthening co-regulation by working closely with the Legal Services Board to ensure that regulation of barristers best supports independence, high standards of professional conduct and effective administration of justice.

Supporting members to provide high quality pro bono advice and representation, including by working with Justice Connect to administer the Pro Bono Scheme and working with courts to improve pro bono referrals.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE | We draw on members’ expertise and views to influence policy, legislation and the justice system

VicBar is committed to advancing the rule of law and access to justice. We do this by speaking out on important issues in the public arena and contributing to law reform proposals. We also set standards to regulate the conduct of barristers and encourage our members to contribute to fair and equal justice for all through pro bono work. We will know we have been successful against this objective when our submissions draw effectively on expertise of members, are targeted in nature, and ultimately are reflected in policy and legislation. A key element of success is the extent to which we work collaboratively and strategically with partner organisations in the sector to promote a more effective and accessible justice system.

We will monitor the following indicators of this outcome:

- Feedback from Government about VicBar’s influence on policy and law reform
- Member feedback about how effectively they are consulted on VicBar submissions and public statements
- Feedback from external organisations about how effectively VicBar collaborates
- Use of structured processes and tools (e.g. Public Statements policy) to identify appropriate issues to speak publicly about
- Amount of pro bono work undertaken by members and number of barristers who are part of pro bono schemes.

Core enablers of our strategy

To deliver on our vision, purpose and the four objectives that underpin the strategic plan, VicBar will invest in our organisational capabilities over the next four years. We will prioritise developing *fit-for-purpose governance that promotes continuity and effective decision making* and *a proactive approach to data collection and performance measurement*.

Fit-for-purpose governance that promotes continuity and effective decision making

To deliver on the strategic plan, VicBar will promote governance structures and processes that support effective decision making and sustain continuity across the life of the plan regardless of leadership changes in the Bar Council. We will implement several initiatives to develop this capability, including:

- Ensure that roles of Bar Office and Bar Council are clearly defined and best equip VicBar to support members, now and into the future
- Review roles and responsibilities undertaken by President of the Bar and best arrangements to deliver on these roles
- Ensure Committees are empowered to effectively draw on expertise of members
- Review regulatory functions and responsibilities undertaken by the Bar to ensure appropriate decision-making authorities.

Proactive data collection and performance measurement

VicBar will focus on more proactive, purposeful and efficient data collection to measure our performance against the plan over the next four years. We will implement several initiatives to develop this capability, including:

- Identify opportunities to use existing organisational data in new and enhanced ways, including through new approaches to data collection and management
- Develop approach to obtaining regular member feedback through surveys that is minimally burdensome on members and provides more trend data
- Define cultural attributes of VicBar and survey members to monitor culture at the Bar over time
- Develop approach to regularly obtaining data from members, clerks and the Bar Roll to monitor trends in economic performance of the Bar
- Drive a culture of performance measurement and data-driven approaches by monitoring and regularly reporting on key indicators.