

## QLS Disability and Accessibility Network (DAN)

# Position Statement

## Our Vision

The QLS Disability and Accessibility Network has been formed to support, educate and strengthen the legal profession by breaking down the barriers to disability inclusion and encouraging disability confidence, throughout the membership of the QLS.

## Our Principles

- All members of the legal profession, regardless of disability, should have equal opportunities when it comes to employment.
- We believe that competency as a lawyer is not necessarily linked to physical ability, but to each person's skills, values and behaviours.
- We believe that for many people with disabilities, the lack of accessibility and lack of acceptance represents a greater barrier to inclusion than their disabilities.

## The Context

- The term "disability" has a wide meaning, and includes at a minimum physical, sensory, intellectual, neurological and mental health disabilities, and chronic illness.
- At least 22.9% of Queenslanders live with disability, yet people with disability are underrepresented in the legal profession.
- Many people with disabilities who are able to conceal or minimise their disabilities are reluctant to disclose them for fear of missed opportunities, reprisal, exclusion, and bullying.
- We cannot quantify how many people with disabilities have been discouraged from attempting to join the legal profession believing that their disabilities would be a barrier to their acceptance at each stage of the journey, from education to training to employment.

## Our Position

- We strongly believe that people with disabilities are more than capable of performing and excelling in a career in law.
- We wish to support members, student members and aspiring members of QLS, with and without disabilities, to work together to break down the barriers to inclusion, by:
  - building a peer support network for QLS members and student members with disabilities;
  - championing the abilities and capabilities of QLS members and student members with disabilities;
  - raising awareness of accessibility issues and the adjustments that can overcome many of those issues;
  - advocating for equal opportunity and access to education, training and employment for people with disabilities seeking a career in law, to support them to find their place in the legal profession;
  - working collaboratively with the QLS Equity and Diversity Committee and other QLS legal policy committees, as well as wider groups such as the Disabled Australian Lawyers Alliance, to raise the voices and perspectives of people with disability and advance disability rights; and
  - providing a platform for educational and networking events that bring together those living with and without disability in the legal profession.
- As members of the legal profession living with disabilities, we will create visibility for disability.