

Report of the Standing Committee on Equality and Diversity 2018

The Standing Committee on Equality and Diversity (SCED) was inaugurated in March 2018. Its terms of reference are:

- a. To promote and protect equality and diversity within the Bar;
- b. To assist the Bar Council in devising strategies to combat discrimination and harassment within the Bar;
- c. To educate the profession about the values of diversity and equality;
- d. To assist the Bar Council to develop and implement its equality and diversity policy and guidance for the profession;
- e. To undertake initiatives to widen access to and strengthen diversity in the profession;
- f. To communicate the profession's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and to provide focus and a channel for views on equality, diversity and inclusion at the Bar;
- g. To provide assistance to Bar Council in highlighting and considering barriers to accessing justice, particularly those which are connected to protected characteristics under Articles 1, 20 and 22 of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights;
- h. To cooperate and assist the related work of other committees of the Bar Council; and
- i. To support the strategic aims of the Bar Council; and
- j. To consider and make recommendations to the Bar Council on any issue relating to equality, diversity and non-discrimination referred by the Bar Council to the SCED.

The SCED, which currently has 8 members, has in the course of the past year looked at a number of issues, including the feasibility of introducing measures for relieving the financial burden of members going through maternity and early years of paternity and expects to be in a position to make recommendation on a funding scheme for limited financial support. The SCED also considered the prevalence and impact of sexual and other forms of harassment or victimization, and met on two occasions, Ms Linda Wong, the Director of Rainlily with a view to devising a mechanism to handle complaints of harassment as well as ways to support complainants.

In June 2018, the SCED launched a Survey on Chambers Practices to all Heads of Chambers. 38 sets of Chambers responded to the Survey and provided valuable information about the level of awareness of the values of equality, diversity and inclusiveness and to assess what practices and measures, if any, are already in place amongst chambers to cater for members of diverse needs, including members with disability. Our committee is in the course of finalising a model Equality and Diversity Policy to be proposed to the Bar Council to recommend to Chambers for adoption.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Bar Chairman, Philip Dykes S.C., for proposing the setting up of the SCED and for his support throughout the year. I would also like to thank the members for their hard work in relation to all the initiatives mentioned above which will pay the way for a productive year ahead.

Gladys Li, S.C.
Chairman
Standing Committee on Equality and Diversity

8 January 2019

Members:

Gladys Li, S.C. (Chairman)

Vandana Rajwani

Wing Kay Po

Linda Wong

Kirsteen Lau

Azan Marwah

Isabel Tam

Geoffrey Yeung