

## DISABILITY CAN BE A CHALLENGE, NOT A BARRIER

*In the lead-up to International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December, MFA DE&I Advisory Council member Petrice Koutsis reflects on how our industry can better support workers living with disability.*



**Petrice Koutsis is Partnerships Trader at UM Brisbane.**

To me, disability is not a weakness, it's a superpower. My superpower comes with my empathy for others, being open and understanding that although you cannot see when someone is struggling, it does not mean they're not.

My superpower has given me resilience and the strength to work full time and push through the bad days. My superpower has given me courage to speak up for things I believe in within DE&I. My superpower has shown me that although I have a chronic illness, I can do anything.

**What should the media industry be doing to better support or accommodate disabled persons?**

The stigma around disabilities and what people can or cannot do is something that needs to be addressed and dismantled through discussion, the SBS Core Inclusion courses, and by people being more aware of others around them.

**My disability is invisible, but it does not mean it's not there.**

The idea that people with disability cannot do a certain job due to their condition is to me not a barrier, but a challenge. Prove them wrong and show different ways of working. My disability is invisible, but it does not mean it's not there. Just because you can't see that someone is sick, it doesn't mean they're not. The biggest thing you can do to support someone with a disability is to listen to them and understand their needs.

In life and our careers, there is not one way of doing things. There are always different ways to complete the same task to achieve the same goal. No two people work the same way in ordinary situations; those with disability are still able to get the tasks done, they just have to do it slightly differently.

**People need to see that others who have a disability are thriving.**

My illness – in theory – should have hindered me, kept me quiet but it hasn't and it won't. I will always strive to have a voice, and to help others feel safe and feel as though they belong. People need to see that others who have a disability are thriving so together we can eliminate the stigma that surrounds disability.

My illness is a superpower.