

## Sex-change patient to sue hospital

LAWYERS for a man who had surgery to become a woman but later resumed living as a male say they will seek significant damages after winning the right to sue over the operation.

Alan Michael Finch was 21 and a patient at the Monash Medical Centre's gender dysphoria clinic in 1988 when he had his genitals removed and was fitted with a false vagina.

He told the County Court that by 1996, he was "a mess" and struggling to live as "Helen".

The following year he started revision surgery on his breasts and reverted to life as a man.

Mr Finch, now 37, was yesterday granted an extension of the six-year time limit in which he can sue the clinic and his medical team for what he alleges was negligent treatment.

In his decision, Judge Michael McInerney accepted that Mr Finch had not considered legal action until 1996, when he read a neuropsychological report that described his masculinity as

above average. The report, which also said he did not display any female gender identity, was prepared the year before his gender reassignment operation.

His lawyer, Anne Shortall of Arnold Thomas and Becker, said the firm was considering moving the action to the Supreme Court, because of the level of damages in the higher jurisdiction and the lawsuit's complexity. A medical centre spokesman declined to comment while the case was continuing.

Chee Chee Leung