**YOUR FUTURE, YOUR DECISION: Inquiry into Powers of Attorney**

From Johan Scheffer MLC, Chair
12 June 2009

The Victorian Parliament’s Law Reform Committee today called for public input into a review of laws that help Victorians plan for their future.

“Most Victorians don’t give much thought to what will happen when they are no longer able to make decisions themselves because of an accident or illness,’ said the Committee’s Chair, Mr Johan Scheffer MLC.

“At some stage in their life, many people will need someone else to make decisions for them about important matters such as finances, healthcare and lifestyle. Powers of attorney are one way that the law helps people plan for these situations.”

The Committee is examining how existing power of attorney laws can be streamlined and simplified.

“Currently there are four different types of powers of attorney documents in Victoria,” said Mr Scheffer. “You need to sign two different documents if you want to give someone power to look after both your finances and your healthcare. It is very confusing.”

The Committee is also considering how to minimise abuse of powers of attorney.

“There are anecdotal reports of pressure on people to grant powers of attorney, and of attorneys misusing their powers,” said Mr Scheffer.

“Victoria’s ageing population means that these documents are going to be even more important to more people in the future,” stated Mr Scheffer.

According to ABS data, nearly 20% of Victoria’s population is aged over 60 years, with this percentage predicted to increase significantly over the next twenty years.

Mr Scheffer urged all interested individuals and organisations to make a submission to the inquiry.

The terms of reference and information about how to make a submission to the Committee are available on the Committee’s website at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/archive/lawreform.

**For further information or comment contact Ms Kerryn Riseley, Executive Officer, Victorian Parliament Law Reform Committee: 8682 2850.**