



**Australian Government**  
**Attorney-General's Department**

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2 April 2026

Ms Ella George MP  
Chair  
Victorian Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee  
Parliament House, Spring Street  
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Dear Ms George

I refer to your letter of 17 February 2026 to the Secretary, Ms Katherine Jones PSM, seeking information from the Australian Attorney-General's Department (the department) on national responses to harms associated with coercive group behaviour. The Secretary has asked me to respond on her behalf. I thank the Parliament of Victoria's Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee (the Committee) for your interest in the work of the department through the Inquiry into the recruitment methods and impacts of cults and organised fringe groups (the Inquiry). Noting this is a state Inquiry, it is not appropriate for the Commonwealth to provide a formal submission. However, to assist the Committee, the department is happy to provide the following information on a voluntary basis.

The Australian Government, and state and territory governments, have developed the National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence. The National Principles, released in September 2023, outline a shared understanding of coercive control and its impacts. The National Principles help raise awareness of coercive control, inform more effective responses to family and domestic violence, and promote more consistent support and safety outcomes for victim-survivors. While the National Principles describe a shared national understanding of coercive control perpetrated by individuals in the context of family and domestic violence, some concepts articulated by the National Principles relating to coercive control may be of interest to the Committee's consideration of cults and organised fringe groups. Further information, including the National Principles and explanatory resources, factsheets and videos, can be found at [www.ag.gov.au/coercivecontrol](http://www.ag.gov.au/coercivecontrol).

The department also leads the development and implementation of the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030* (National Strategy), a nationally coordinated, strategic framework for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. One of the measures under the National Strategy is the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#), which set out a nationally consistent approach to creating organisational cultures and practices that promote the

safety and wellbeing of children in Australia. All governments are responsible for implementing the National Principles, or equivalent child safe standards, in their state or territory – Victoria has embedded the National Principles into its *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2025* (Vic).

The Commonwealth *Criminal Code Act 1995* contains a range of offences which, complementary to State and Territory frameworks, address behaviour that can be a means of, or adjacent to, coercive control. For example, section 474.17 criminalises the use of a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence – an offence that could capture conduct by an individual or group that is coercive, controlling or manipulative. The Commonwealth keeps these laws under constant review to ensure they are responsive to emerging threats and methodologies. Recent Commonwealth reforms in this space include:

- amendments to outlaw the practice of ‘doxxing’ or the malicious release of personal data online under sections 474.17C and 474.17D, and
- strengthening offences targeting the creation and non-consensual sharing online of sexually explicit material, including artificially generated material, under section 474.17A.

Thank you again for your consideration of these matters. We would be grateful if you could please consult us before publishing this letter.

Yours sincerely



Chris Collett  
First Assistant Secretary, Children and Families Division