

Ella George MP

Chair Inquiry into Recruitment

Methods and Impacts of Cults

and Organised Fringe Groups.

April 27, 2026.

Dear Ms George,

Meli Community (Meli) is a Victorian not-for-profit organisation committed to strengthening communities through supporting people. Meli's Vision is for a fair, safe, and inclusive community where everyone can thrive, and we are committed to fostering a culture that reflects our Values of Build Connection, Show Courage, Inspire Action, Celebrate Difference, and Be Dynamic.

Meli offers a unique combination of services to support members of our community throughout their lifetime, from early childhood through to adolescence and adulthood. Meli operates in the Barwon, Central Highlands, and Wimmera South West areas of Victoria, delivering kindergartens and vital community support services including family violence services for women, men and children, foster and kinship care, homelessness support, mental health, drug and alcohol services, family services, school engagement, youth justice, family and relationship counselling, financial counselling, Gambler's Help, emergency relief, employment pathways, and NDIS services.

As indicated by the breadth of services delivered from Meli, we are uniquely positioned to provide an array of service interventions to many members of the communities that we serve. Over the past three years, Meli has become more familiar with the needs of people who have left cults and high control groups, primarily located in the Geelong and surrounding areas. The expressed needs for many of these people centred on access to safe, affordable, housing, specialist family violence intervention/s, access to income support and referral pathways to training and education providers.

In deference to this service demand trend and noting the Inquiry into Recruitment Methods and Impacts of Cults and Organised Fringe Groups, Meli has commenced a

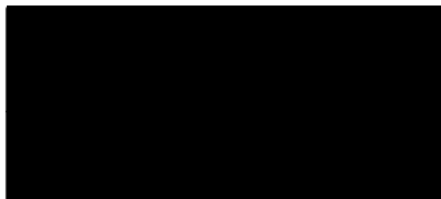
collaboration with people who have lived experience of high control groups, to best understand a Meli approach that is culturally appropriate and trauma informed.

To date, key Meli leadership and practice leadership staff have attended training and information sessions to increase knowledge, understanding and prevalence of people who have experienced high control groups. This training has been instrumental in raising awareness across these staffing groups to provide the intelligence that will enable an appropriate and informed response. The development of a more rigorous training approach is under development, and this will be enhanced by a Community of Practice that is well supported by lived experience experts to provide consultation and specialist knowledge to Meli in support of this work. It is our intention that this training will be made available across all Meli's service delivery practitioners, with a particular emphasis on our specialist family violence and housing/homelessness services.

Meli is deeply committed to the ongoing development and subsequent delivery of service/s to people exiting high control groups that will enable self-determination, recovery and independence.

Please do not hesitate to contact should you require additional information on Meli's proposed approach.

Yours Sincerely



Bernadette McCartney

Executive Director, Services

