**Terms of Reference**

**Received by Order in Council on 18 January 2005.**

To inquire into and report to Parliament on issues relating to strengthening communities through improved community engagement in outer urban areas, including both developing and established communities.

In particular, the Committee is requested to:

1. Investigate existing forms of community engagement and recommend ways to strengthen and empower communities and build social capital;
2. Examine the role of community groups and all levels of government in promoting community engagement, with a view to strengthening outer suburban communities;
3. Investigate the role of new forms of communication, including the Internet and associated technologies, in supporting and enhancing community engagement;
4. Identify opportunities for increasing community engagement between Melbourne's outer suburban municipalities and communities;
5. Identify barriers to participate in various forms of community engagement and ways to overcome these barriers;
6. Investigate the report into how life-long learning, neighbourhood houses and other organisations can strengthen local communities;
7. Investigate and report on options for engaging, with a culturally diverse community, older persons, people with a disability and youth in the local community;
8. The role of volunteers and volunteer organisations in strengthening local communities;
9. The role of mentoring in the outer suburbs;
10. Examine national and international initiatives relevant to these issues; and
11. Investigate the implications of building new outer urban communities, on community cohesion in nearby rural communities, particularly during the transition period from rural to urban.

Following a request for an extension in the Inquiry reporting date, the Committee is now due to report to the Parliament on 31 July 2006.