



Media release

Legal and Social Issues Committee

Committee shares lived experience insights into coercive high-control groups

The Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee has published key insights from its recent questionnaire examining the recruitment methods and the impacts of cults and organised fringe groups.

The questionnaire was opened alongside the call for submissions to the Inquiry, providing another way for people with lived experience to contribute directly. It invited individuals to share their experiences on the recruitment tactics and behaviours of coercive groups, helping the Committee better understand the often complex and lasting effects of involvement in these groups.

“Lived experience is essential to understanding the reality of coercive groups—from how they recruit and maintain control over people, to the long-term impacts on members, those who leave, and their loved ones. These insights will help inform the Committee’s work going forward and provide an important foundation for recommendations,” said Committee Chair Ella George.

The Committee received 317 responses to the questionnaire revealing clear patterns in how people are recruited and the lasting harms they experience. Many respondents reported first contact through family, friends or trusted networks, while others were approached during vulnerable times in their lives.

Responses described psychological harm, restrictions on personal freedoms, and in some cases physical or sexual abuse. Participants described the long-term impacts of coercive high-control groups as life-altering, often leaving them to rebuild their lives from scratch.

“We are grateful to those who bravely shared their lived experiences. Their voices provide critical insights into the complex ways coercive groups operate, and the profound impacts these groups have on individuals and families,” Ms George said.

The insights into the questionnaire are available to read on the Committee’s [website](#). An [interactive data report](#) is also available.

The Committee is currently examining submissions to the Inquiry and has commenced public hearings.

Issued: 16 September 2025