

# INQUIRY INTO THE HANDLING OF CHILD ABUSE BY RELIGIOUS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

## SUBMISSION GUIDE

### 1. WHO CAN MAKE SUBMISSIONS?

All interested parties can make submissions to the Inquiry. The bi-partisan Family and Community Development Committee is seeking submissions from both individuals and organisations in relation to its Terms of Reference to the Inquiry.

The Committee welcomes submissions from victims of child abuse and others who have been affected by the consequences of such abuse.

It acknowledges that preparing submissions and giving evidence to such an Inquiry can be a very difficult experience for victims of child abuse and their supporters. This Guide is intended to assist in the process of preparing a submission.

### 2. WHAT EVIDENCE CAN SUBMISSIONS INCLUDE?

The Committee is seeking information relating to:

- The causes and effects of criminal abuse within religious and other non-government organisations.
- Whether victims were in any way discouraged from reporting such abuse, either within the relevant organisation or to the police.
- If such abuse was reported, how the reporting of their experience of abuse was handled.
- The consequences of abuse, including the effect on the victims and others, and the consequences for the perpetrator(s).
- The adequacy of the policies, procedures and practices within religious and other non-government organisations that relate to the prevention of, and response to, child abuse.
- Suggestions for reform, to help prevent abuse and ensure that allegations of abuse are properly dealt with. This includes both reforms to Victorian laws and reforms to the policies, procedures and practices within religious and other non-government organisations.

### 3. WHAT SORT OF SUBMISSIONS CAN BE MADE?

Submissions may be in writing or, where an individual does not wish to make a written submission, on a verbal basis only.

All submissions are treated as public, unless otherwise requested. The Committee can receive written and oral evidence on a confidential basis where this is requested and agreed to by the Committee. This will generally be in situations in which victims believe that giving evidence publicly may have an adverse effect on them or their families.

Please indicate if you want your submission treated as confidential and provide a brief explanation.

### 4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee has been asked by the Victorian Government to consider and report to the Parliament on the processes by which religious and other non-government organisations respond to the criminal abuse of children by personnel within their organisations, including:

1. the practices, policies and protocols in such organisations for the handling of allegations of criminal abuse of children, including measures put in place by various organisations in response to concerns about such abuse within the organisation or the potential for such abuse to occur;
2. whether there are systemic practices in such organisations that operate to preclude or discourage the reporting of suspected criminal abuse of children to State authorities; and
3. whether changes to law or to practices, policies and protocols in such organisations are required to help prevent criminal abuse of children by personnel in such organisations and to deal with allegations of such abuse.

In undertaking the Inquiry, the Committee has been asked not to impinge on the responsibilities of police or the courts in relation to particular cases or prejudice the conduct or outcome of investigations or court proceedings.

Parliamentary Committees do not have a role in investigating criminal matters.

This Guide is intended to assist organisations and individuals who want to make a written submission and/or who would like to present evidence before the Committee at a public hearing.

The questions in this Guide provide an indication of the issues the Committee will be considering, but they are not intended to be exhaustive. It is not necessary to address all the questions in a submission.

## 5. SCOPE OF INQUIRY

This Inquiry considers how religious and other non-government organisations respond to the criminal abuse of children by personnel within their organisations.

The Terms of Reference cover:

- All religions and denominations.
- Non-government organisations providing child related services or activities (in areas such as welfare, education, sport or recreation).

The Inquiry will not be assuming responsibility for investigating individual cases that are currently under investigation by police, but will be able to refer particular matters to the police for investigation.

## 6. CONDUCT OF THE INQUIRY

The Committee will conduct a thorough, evidence-based Inquiry that is sensitive to the needs and concerns of all individuals affected by child abuse in religious and other organisations.

In conducting its investigations, the Committee will seek written submissions up to 31 August 2012. It will also hold public hearings from September 2012.

In addition to submissions and hearings, under the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*, the Committee has the legal power to compel the attendance of persons and the production of documents and other things.

The Committee will generally take evidence in public. That is, it will publish the submissions it receives on its website and will undertake hearings in public.

However, the Committee also has the power to receive evidence on a confidential basis where this is requested. All parties making submissions are encouraged to indicate whether they would like their evidence to be treated as confidential.

The circumstances under which the Committee may consider receiving evidence confidentially include whether victims believe that giving evidence publicly may have an adverse effect on them or their families. Oral evidence may also be received on a confidential basis if requested.

The Committee may use confidential evidence in its deliberations, but will not quote from confidential evidence in its report.

## 7. EVIDENCE FROM VICTIMS OF CRIMINAL CHILD ABUSE

The Terms of Reference ask the Committee to examine the processes and procedures that are used by religious and other organisations to respond to suspected, alleged and proven instances of criminal child abuse.

The views of victims regarding the effectiveness or otherwise of processes will be critical in informing the Committee's investigations.

There is no single way for any person or organisation to approach a submission. The Committee understands that people will want to approach their submissions differently.

The Committee seeks to ensure it minimises any experiences through the Inquiry that may further traumatise victims of abuse and/or their families and supporters).

The Committee emphasises that for those people who do not want to retell their experience of abuse, the Terms of Reference enable them to focus specifically on the response to the experience by the organisation. At the same time, the Committee also recognises that for some people, retelling their experience will be an important part of their submission.

The Committee acknowledges that revisiting issues relating to experiences of abuse may be distressing and traumatic.

Many individuals have existing supports that can provide assistance with writing submissions and participating in public hearings.

For those people who feel they need support to prepare a submission, but do not have existing support, please contact the Committee to discuss your support requirements.

Please indicate in your submission if you want:

- Your submission considered confidential
- To appear before a public hearing.

## 8. DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

The Committee acknowledges that there are terms and definitions relating to the Terms of Reference that require further clarification.

### Criminal abuse of children

In the context of criminal abuse of children, criminal abuse generally includes:

- Unlawful physical assaults.
- Sexual abuse offences, such as rape or indecent assault under the *Victorian Crimes Act 1958*.
- Any acts of criminal neglect that may give rise to child protection intervention under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*.
- Facilitating such offences by others.

Sexual and other forms of physical abuse are often linked with demeaning or degrading behaviour that include verbal and emotional abuse. The Terms of Reference allow for consideration of such behaviour that may lead to criminal abuse or allow it to occur.

### Religious organisations

The Committee is seeking submissions from all religious and spiritual faiths.

The term 'religious personnel' covers both 'ministers of religion' and other lay personnel.

- 'Ministers of religion' refers to those who perform spiritual functions associated with beliefs and practices of religious faiths and provide motivation, guidance and training in religious life for the people of congregations and parishes, and the wider community.
- 'Religious personnel' also includes employees and volunteers acting within religious bodies or related organisations.

## Non-government organisations

The Terms of Reference for the Inquiry extend to include abuse occurring within secular, non-government or community organisations.

Organisations that provide child related activities or services (such as welfare, education, sport or recreation) are relevant to the Terms of Reference.

The Committee is seeking submissions relating to how criminal abuse of children is handled in non-government organisations. This includes measures that may exist to prevent abuse.

## 9. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In January 2011 the *Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry* was launched to investigate Victoria's child protection system and make recommendations to strengthen and improve the protection and support of vulnerable young people.

The Inquiry was chaired by former Supreme Court Justice, the Hon Phillip Cummins and reported in January 2012.

The Report considered the issue of the sexual and other abuse of children by personnel in religious organisations, including:

- Whether mandatory reporting of child abuse should be extended to religious personnel.
- Whether the *Working with Children Act 2005* and its vetting procedures apply to religious organisations.
- The internal processes and practices that may operate within religious organisations to preclude or discourage reporting of criminal abuse to the police or other state authorities.

The Inquiry Report recommended that:

A formal investigation should be conducted into the processes by which religious organisations respond to the criminal abuse of children by religious personnel within their organisation. Such an investigation should possess the powers to compel the elicitation of witness evidence and of documentary and electronic evidence.

## 10. RESPONSES TO CHILD ABUSE—VICTIM EXPERIENCES

The Committee is seeking information from victims relating to:

- The causes and effects of criminal abuse within religious and other non-government organisations.
- Whether they were able to report such abuse, either within the relevant organisation or to the police.
- If such abuse was reported, how the reporting of their experience of abuse was handled.

### Reporting the abuse

- 10.1 Could you tell anyone about what happened?
- 10.2 Did you feel discouraged from reporting the abuse?
- 10.3 Who did you tell about what happened?
- 10.4 How long after the abuse occurred did you tell someone?
- 10.5 Did you tell the religious body or other organisation about the abuse?
- 10.6 If you delayed in telling or reporting what prevented you from disclosing earlier?

### Response to the disclosure

- 10.7 What was the initial response from the organisation?
- 10.8 If there was an investigation of the abuse, how was it conducted?
- 10.9 What meetings or other interactions did you have with the organisation?
- 10.10 Were you encouraged or supported to report your abuse to the police? Did you do this? If not, why not?
- 10.11 What were the consequences for the perpetrator(s)?
- 10.12 What were the effects of the response to the disclosure on the victim and other individuals? (eg. Family members, other members of the organisation)

### Support

- 10.13 Were you supported by the organisation? If so, how?
- 10.14 Did you receive counselling or psychological help? If so, who provided it?
- 10.15 Did you receive an apology or an acknowledgment of the abuse you had suffered?
- 10.16 How adequate was the support that was offered?

### Result

- 10.17 Did the religious or other organisation accept responsibility for what happened?
- 10.18 What was the consequence for the perpetrator(s)?
- 10.19 Were you offered an apology, compensation or other forms of assistance? If so, were there any conditions attached to accepting that compensation or assistance?
- 10.20 As a result of your complaint to the religious or other organisation what actions were taken by them?
- 10.21 How long did it take to achieve a result?
- 10.22 Were you satisfied with the process in dealing with the complaint and/or the result?
- 10.23 What was your view of the effectiveness and adequacy of any compensation, either offered or received?
- 10.24 What were the effects of the result on you and other individuals? (eg. Family members and supporters)

## 11. RESPONSES TO REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE—RELIGIOUS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The Committee's Terms of Reference ask it to investigate the practices, policies and protocols in religious and other organisations.

In considering these practices, it is seeking submissions on:

- The nature of the policies and their effectiveness
- The implementation of policies and how they are complied with
- Processes for review or evaluation of policies

- Any accountability mechanisms surrounding them
- How supports are provided to victims
- The approach to monetary and other forms of compensation.

#### Current policies, protocols and frameworks

- 11.1** What policies, protocols, frameworks and/or charters are currently in place in Victorian religious and secular non-government organisations to address child abuse within those organisations?
- 11.2** What is the nature of the policy?
- 11.2.1** Is it proactive/reactive?
- 11.2.2** Is it publicly available (if so, how)?
- 11.2.3** Is it time limited?
- 11.3** Who is responsible for the policy? Is the policy internal or external to the governing bodies of the religious or other organisation?
- 11.4** How are alleged and proven offenders dealt with?

#### Accountability mechanisms

- 11.5** What accountability mechanisms apply to the organisation's policy? Is it open to outside scrutiny or review?
- 11.6** Is there an appeal process or dispute resolution process for victims or offenders?

#### Supports for victims

- 11.7** What supports are available to victims and other family members or significant others?
- 11.8** Can victims seek independent support?
- 11.9** What is the role of counsellors in religious and other organisations?

#### Compensation and reparation

- 11.10** Do systems for addressing abuse within the organisation allow for monetary or other forms of compensation?

**11.11** How is the compensation system/procedure run? Is it independent from the operations of the organisation? Is it overseen by a panel?

**11.12** Does the acceptance of one form of compensation prevent victims pursuing other forms of compensation?

The Committee is seeking copies of documents used by religious and other organisations in responding to child abuse.

#### 12. INVESTIGATING REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE

The Committee is seeking submissions about internal investigation processes used by religious and other organisations in relation to child abuse.

It is also seeking information about processes for referring reports of child abuse to the police.

The Committee would appreciate receiving any internal documentation from religious and other organisations relating to investigation and referral processes in the context of child abuse.

**12.1** What processes for internal investigation exist in religious and other organisations?

**12.2** Have allegations of child abuse been reported to police when the organisation is made aware of them?

**12.3** What processes are in place for reporting cases of alleged child abuse to the police?

**12.4** In what circumstances, if any, would the alleged abuse not be reported?

#### 13. LAW AND LEGAL PROCESSES

The Committee recognises that the processes to address child abuse within their organisations might involve consideration of doctrinal laws, customs and ethical codes specific to a religion.

Regardless of observance of religious laws, customs and ethical codes, state laws regarding criminal child abuse must be observed and given precedence.

The Committee is seeking submission on areas of law and legal processes that include but are not limited to:

- Religious laws and practice

- Mandatory reporting
- Working with children checks
- Potential new laws.

### Religious laws and practice

The Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry noted that while internal complaint and redress systems may have a role to play, in many cases their processes and procedures are not necessarily subject to public scrutiny.

- 13.1 In what ways are religious laws and procedures used to address abuse within the organisation?
- 13.2 Have internal systems of investigation discouraged reporting of criminal acts to the police?
- 13.3 Have internal systems of redress discouraged or prevented civil legal action being taken by victims?
- 13.4 Under what circumstances is it appropriate for religious organisations to apply internal sanctions to offenders, such as expulsion or laicisation [defrocking]?
- 13.5 Have the legal structures used by religious bodies to manage their affairs and their assets acted to discourage or prevent civil legal action being taken by victims against offenders?

### Mandatory reporting

The Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry considered the issue of extending mandatory reporting of abuse under the Victorian *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* to religious personnel.

Mandatory reporting is a function of the statutory child protection system rather than the criminal law.

It also considered that the Victorian Government should impose an appropriate penalty for a failure to report suspected abuse under the *Crimes Act 1958*.

- 13.6 Should mandatory reporting of cases of alleged criminal abuse be extended to ministers of religion?

- 13.7 To what extent should the reporting of suspicions of abuse be circumscribed by laws, customs and ethical codes of religions? (For example, should the sacrament of the Catholic confessional remain sacrosanct in these circumstances?)
- 13.8 What consequences may flow from the extension of mandatory reporting to ministers of religion?

### Working with children checks

Another issue considered by the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry was whether the *Working with Children Act 2005* (WWC Act) should apply to religious personnel.

The WWC Act established a system to prevent people who are not suitable from working with children.

The WWC Act applies to personnel in religious organisations who regularly work or volunteer with children and young people.

- 13.9 What procedures do religious and other organisations have in place to ensure the suitability of employing people in the organisation who work with children?
- 13.10 Are these in addition to those required to be undertaken by state law?
- 13.11 How is the *Working with Children Act 2005* applied in the context of ministers of religion?

### Potential new laws

The Committee notes that, internationally, some countries have explored the creation of laws that hold administrators in religious or other organisations legally responsible for the criminal actions of those working or volunteering within the organisation for whom they have responsibility.

In addition to civil liability on the organisation, in some cases these laws include criminal penalties. This is particularly the case where it can be shown that individuals in the hierarchy of the organisation were aware of the abuse and either ignored it or actively covered it up.

- 13.12 Are new laws required to more effectively address the institutional abuse of children?
- 13.13 Should officials in religious and other organisations be held criminally responsible for the actions of offenders of child abuse in their employ or for whom they have responsibility? Under what circumstances should this apply?

#### 14. RESPONDING TO OFFENDERS AND ALLEGED OFFENDERS

The Committee is interested to hear about how religious and other organisations aim to protect the rights of children against personnel who abuse their position of trust.

In particular, the Committee is seeking to hear about how religious and other bodies handle instances in which there is suspected abuse, but insufficient evidence to charge or convict an alleged offender.

- 14.1 Are there formal or informal practices or guidelines for the personnel accused, suspected or convicted of criminal or other abuse?
- 14.2 How should cases be dealt with when there is suspected abuse but insufficient evidence?
- 14.3 How do religious and other organisations protect victims when alleged offenders have not been charged or convicted of a criminal offence?

#### 15. DATA, PRIVACY AND PUBLIC INTEREST

The Committee is seeking information about how data is recorded by religious and other organisations in the context of reports on child abuse.

It is also seeking submissions on the relationship between privacy and public interest. For example, concerns have been raised in numerous Inquiries that the laity in Christian denominations are often not told about the crimes of suspected crimes of religious personnel within their communities.

- 15.1 Does the organisation maintain comprehensive records data on the incidence and prevalence of abuse against children in the organisation? If so, are such records publicly available?
- 15.2 Do organisations share information regarding proven or suspected cases of abuse to other agencies even in cases where it is not compelled to do so (for example, schools, Department of Human Services)? What confidentiality/privacy considerations flow from this?
- 15.3 Do religious organisations inform the laity and other members of the religious or wider community about abuses committed by its members? Should it do so?
- 15.4 How can the wider community be informed about child abuse/child protection issues or suspicions?

#### 16. PREVENTION

The Committee's Terms of Reference ask it to consider the prevention of criminal abuse of children.

Other Inquiries into child abuse within religious organisations have emphasised the importance of religious and other organisations being proactive in establishing preventive policies and procedures.

The Committee is seeking information about approaches to risk management of child abuse, such as early identification of patterns of behaviour by offenders and potential offenders.

It is also seeking submissions about proactive approaches.

- 16.1 Are there education or prevention programs/policies with regard to the abuse of children and other vulnerable people in religious and other organisations?
  - 16.1.1 What type of programs? Are they one-off or ongoing?
  - 16.1.2 Who is responsible for developing the programs?
  - 16.1.3 Are these programs internally/externally run? Or both?

16.1.4 Who attends the education programs? Is it compulsory?

16.2 For organisations responsible for the accreditation of ministers of religion, do the curricula include training regarding sexual and other forms of abuse (for example, at seminaries)?

16.3 Have these programs been evaluated? To what extent have they been successful in addressing or raising awareness of these forms of criminal abuse?

16.4 Does the organisation's framework or policy have provisions or guidelines for proactively encouraging/facilitating the reporting of criminal (or other) abuse of children by people within the organisation? Are new laws required to more effectively address the institutional abuse of children?

## 17. RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL BODIES AND ORGANISATIONS

Criminal abuse of children is primarily and ultimately a matter for investigation by police and child protection personnel and prosecution by state authorities.

The Committee is seeking information about the relationship between religious and other organisations and external bodies, such as the police.

The Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry reported that religious organisations have a responsibility to encourage victims to report criminal behaviour to the police.

The Committee is interested to hear about the role of specialist police departments, such as Victoria's Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Unit, in responding to reports of child abuse in religious and other organisations. This includes the role of the police in developing a prosecution case.

It is also interested to learn about the role of independent support and advocacy groups, such as those that respond to the trauma associated with rape and sexual assault such as the Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA).

### Victoria Police

17.1 Do any formal/written protocols exist between religious / non-government organisations and Victoria Police?

17.2 Are Victoria Police guidelines and procedures for investigating child abuse consistently applied across religious or other organisations? Are there any guidelines specific to the investigation of ministers of religion?

17.3 Does Victoria Police have liaison officers that are dedicated to working with religious organisations on cases of criminal abuse? If not, should there be?

### Department of Human Services

17.4 Do religious and other organisations have any formal protocols with the Department of Human Services? If not, what form should they take?

### Other organisations

17.5 Are there formal or informal protocols or relationships between religious and other organisations and non-government bodies, such as CASA? If not, what form should they take?

17.6 Are there relationships or liaisons between religious and other organisations and victims advocacy groups?

17.7 Do the organisations network with religious and other organisations to address abuse? For example, interfaith bodies?

## 18. SUBMISSIONS

The Committee welcomes written submissions addressing one, multiple or all Terms of Reference of the Inquiry.

Submissions close on **31 August 2012**.

Submissions can be provided in either hard copy or by email to the Executive Officer.

Electronic submissions should be sent via:

- The eSubmission form on the Committee's website: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/fcdc>
- Or by email to: [fcdc@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:fcdc@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Hard copy submissions should be sent to:

Family and Community Development Committee  
Parliament House  
Spring Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

The Committee draws your attention that **all submissions are public documents unless confidentiality is requested**.

Please contact the Committee if confidentiality is sought, as this has bearing on how evidence can be used in the report to Parliament.

## 19. MAKING A WRITTEN SUBMISSION

### Who can make a submission?

Any person or organisation can make a submission to a Committee. Individuals, community groups, private organisations, representatives of government departments and agencies and anyone else interested in an inquiry currently before the Committee are encouraged to make a submission.

### Terms of Reference

Before preparing your submission, it is important that you read the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, as your submission must be relevant to the committee's Inquiry. If you do not have a copy of the Terms of Reference, please contact the Committee's office.

Please indicate in your submission whether you wish to give verbal evidence to the Committee. The Committee will indicate to you whether it would like to appear at a hearing to give verbal evidence.

### Preparing a submission

Your submission may address all or part of the terms of reference. You do not have to comment on every aspect of the Terms of Reference, nor are you confined to just one aspect.

The Terms of Reference are intended to cover a wide range of issues relating to the causes and effects of child abuse, whether such abuse is responded to, and the adequacy of such responses.

The Terms of Reference enable individuals to recount their experiences of instances of abuse, the response to such abuse and the consequences of such abuse.

Your submission can contain factual information, opinion or both. You may want to draw the attention of the Committee to something relevant to the Inquiry. You may choose to emphasise solutions to the matter or issue before the committee. This is entirely your choice.

Your submission will be welcomed by the Committee provided it is relevant, not frivolous or offensive in nature, and addresses the terms of reference.

### Submission format

There is no specific method for organising or presenting a submission. Your contribution can take the form of a letter, a short summary paper or a longer research document. You can include relevant data in appendices or incorporate them in the body of the text. It is important that the structure, argument and conclusions of your submission are clear.

### Hard copy or electronic submissions

You can send your submission in hard copy, or electronically. If you send it in hard copy, a typed document on A4 paper is preferred. If this is not possible, a handwritten submission is acceptable.

### Electronic submission

You can provide your submission electronically, by email, on CD/DVD or by eSubmission (see the Committee website). If you have any questions about the suitability of your file format/size, please contact the committee office.

## Verification of your details

Please sign the submission. Sign on behalf of yourself, or on behalf of the organisation you are representing. If you are representing an organisation, please indicate your position in the organisation. If relevant, specify at what level the submission has been authorised: branch, executive, president, sub-committee, executive committee, national body, etc. If you are sending your submission electronically, please provide your name, and relevant contact details (such as address or phone number).

## Supplementary material

You may wish to support your submission with other forms of material, such as a video, photographs or objects. Please contact the staff of the Committee if you plan to do this, so that appropriate arrangements can be made. This may involve material in your possession being loaned or donated to the Committee. Any material borrowed by the Committee will be returned on completion of the Inquiry.

## Tone of submissions

Submissions form part of the Committee's proceedings, and help inform the Committee about matters relevant to the investigations. Most submissions are made public by the committee, and can be published on the committee's website. Submissions should be relevant, not contain offensive language or remarks, and should not be vexatious. A Committee can choose not to accept a submission if the Committee feels it breaches any of these guidelines.

The Committee may return any evidence that it considers irrelevant to its proceedings, offensive or possible defamatory.

## Parliamentary Privilege

A submission to a Committee becomes a Committee document once the Committee formally decides to accept it as a submission. A Committee may decide not to accept a submission as evidence if it is not relevant to the Terms of Reference, or is offensive.

Once the Committee has authorised the release of a submission, any subsequent publication of it by the Committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. This means that what you say in your submission cannot be used in court against you.

Parliamentary privilege only extends to submissions that are published by the Committee. If a submission is published in another form or for another purpose, that publication will not be protected by parliamentary privilege. This means that you should not reproduce the submission in another format or context. You can, however, refer others to your submission on the Committee's website, or advise them to contact the Committee directly.

It is against parliamentary rules for anyone to try to stop you from making a submission by threats or intimidation. It is also a breach of these rules for anyone to harass you or discriminate against you because you have made a submission, and Parliament can take action against this behaviour.

## Confidentiality

If you wish to have your submission kept confidential, please say so clearly at the top of the submission or in a covering note, explaining why you want it to be kept confidential. If you want part of the submission to be confidential, please put that part on a separate page. The committee will respect requests for confidentiality. If you have concerns about confidentiality, please discuss these with the Committee's Executive Officer before you make a submission.

## Public hearings

Please indicate in your submission whether you wish to give verbal evidence to the Committee. The Committee will indicate to you whether it would like to appear at a hearing to give verbal evidence.

For more information about appearing at a public hearing, see the Parliament of Victoria's Guide to *Giving Evidence at a Public Hearing to a Parliamentary Committee* (available on its website).