



Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee

10 November 2025

Dear Elizabeth

Re: Submission to the Inquiry into the recruitment methods and impacts of cults and organised fringe groups

Thank you for your submission to the Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee's Inquiry into the recruitment methods and impacts of cults and organised fringe groups. The Committee greatly appreciates the time you dedicated to your submission and the insights you have shared.

Your submission has been accepted by the Committee and will be treated as a **public** submission. This means your submission, including your name, will be published on the Committee's website subject to relevant redactions. Redactions are made for a number of reasons, including to protect your privacy and the privacy of others. For example, this includes personal contact details such as your phone number, email address and home address.

Once your submission is published, it will remain on the public record. Your submission will be published on 17 November 2025.

Please see attached your submission as it will be published on the Committee's website. This includes any redactions.

The Committee notes that your submission raises important themes and experiences that are relevant to the Inquiry. The matters you have raised will be considered alongside other evidence received, and may be referred to in the Committee's final report.

Thank you again for your important contribution to the Committee's Inquiry.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Committee Secretariat, via phone (03) 8682 2628 or email at cofg@parliament.vic.gov.au

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ella George'.

Ella George MP
Chair

From: Elizabeth Gibbons [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 21 July 2025 4:00 PM
To: COFG
Subject: Inquiry into the recruitment methods and impacts of cults and organised fringe groups

Hello there,

My name is Elizabeth Gibbons and I am a consumer protection advocate from Ontario, Canada. I heard that you were looking for recruitment methods and impacts of cults and organised fringe groups and I wanted to help out by adding my statement. I heard about this from A Voice Downunder YouTube channel. The form on your website wasn't working for me since I am outside of AU but I am hoping you will hear from those in other countries as well about this topic. Please include the following in your inquiry...

Impact Statement: Addressing the Harm of Coercive Religious Cults

Growing up in a coercive religious environment shaped every part of my development — emotionally, psychologically, and relationally. What was presented as a spiritual path became a blueprint for manipulation, suppression, and shame. In particular, the Roman Catholic cult-like institution I experienced enforced rigid control over identity, sexuality, and personal agency. As a bisexual individual, I internalized deep guilt and fear simply for existing as I am.

These environments are not just spiritually toxic — they are socially dangerous. Their psychological frameworks often mirror those found in other coercive systems like multi-level marketing schemes, where the illusion of support conceals intense manipulation. Many people, like me, carry the trauma from one system straight into another because the psychological conditioning is so deeply embedded.

The long-term impact has been devastating. I spent years in abusive relationships shaped by patterns of self-abandonment and codependency — patterns cultivated by early indoctrination. Recovery has taken years of therapy and conscious unlearning, and I am one of the fortunate ones with access to help.

This is not a private pain — it is a public concern. These cultic systems thrive in legal gray areas, often shielded by claims of religious freedom. But freedom should never protect abuse. We need stronger legislation to define and regulate coercive control, especially when embedded in religious or pseudo-religious organizations. We need public awareness campaigns that treat cultic abuse as a legitimate public health issue. And we need mental health support specifically designed for survivors of religious trauma.

By ignoring the systemic harm these environments cause, we risk perpetuating cycles of abuse for generations. It is time to prioritize the well-being of individuals over the unchecked power of institutions. No one should have to fight for the right to exist safely in their identity.

Thank you,
Elizabeth Gibbons

Please let me know if you have any questions.