

AUSTRALIAN HATE CRIME NETWORK

Media Release

Victorian Government Response to Recommendations on Anti-Vilification Protections

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The Australian Hate Crime Network (AHCN) welcomes the response of the Victorian Government to the Report and recommendations of the Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee's *Inquiry into Anti-Vilification Protections*, which was released this week.

We note that the response supports recommendations proposed in the AHCN's oral submission to the Inquiry.

The AHCN commends the Victorian Government for recognising that vilification, hate crime and hate speech are ongoing problems for some communities in Victoria, just as they are in other parts of Australia.

Professor Gail Mason, Convenor of the AHCN, stated "it is pleasing to see that the Victorian Government intends to extend anti-vilification laws to cover attributes beyond race and religion. Characteristics such as sexuality, disability, sex and gender identity will now receive the same legal protection as race and religion. The impact of vilification or hateful conduct based on any of these characteristics can be profound".

"Time has shown that the current civil incitement threshold is too high and acts as a barrier to effective use of the law. Similarly, the requirement that a prosecution for serious vilification cannot proceed without the written approval of the DPP is unnecessary. We fully support reforms that remove these hurdles".

Professor Mason stated, "Police are the first point of contact for people who have experienced hate crime or criminal vilification. They need to be equipped with the very best tools to record and investigate hate crime. We applaud the Victorian Government's support of mandatory recording of hate crime by police. Mandatory recording is a key element of international best practice. It is a way of both standardising crime data and ensuring that victims are treated with respect and sensitivity". Mason added, "Victoria will lead the country in policing hate crime if this model is introduced. It would need to be accompanied by robust training and resources".

This response by the Victorian Government is a vindication of the many cries for help by victims of vilification and hate conduct over the decades.

The AHCN stands ready to assist the Victorian Government in whatever ways it can.

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