



Legislative Council
Legal and Social Issues Committee

Anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes in Victoria

Inquiry

September 2026

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About the Committee

Functions

The Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee will inquire into and report on any proposal, matter or thing concerned with community services, education, gaming, health, and law and justice.

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Terms of reference

Inquiry into anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes in Victoria

On 18 February 2026, the Legislative Council agreed to the following motion:

That this House requires the Legal and Social Issues Committee to inquire into, consider and report, by 1 September 2026, on the scale and scope of anti-LGBTQIA+ hate crimes occurring in Victoria, including but not limited to —

- (1) the communication and recruitment methods of anti-LGBTIQA+ influencers and hate groups that endorse anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes, including those creating and sharing online content steeped in racism, misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, far-right ideology and unhealthy masculinities;
- (2) current strategies to counter anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes, particularly among young people and how these could be strengthened;
- (3) current anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crime prevention initiatives, and how these could be strengthened;
- (4) existing public and online safety initiatives supporting LGBTIQA+ community members who have experienced hate crimes, including how these supports could be strengthened;
- (5) the role and responsibilities of social media and digital platform owners in preventing and responding to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes;
- (6) existing empirical data regarding the prevalence and trends of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes Australia-wide;
- (7) the impact of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes on diverse LGBTIQA+ communities, including Rainbow Mob, people with disability, and multifaith and multicultural community members;
- (8) interjurisdictional strategies and methods to combat anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes across borders; and
- (9) the relevant work of the Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities, relevant government advisory groups, including but not limited to relevant community, health and law enforcement organisations to combat anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes.

Chair's foreword

This Inquiry was established in response to a disturbing spike in targeted violence against predominantly gay and bisexual men in Victoria. Online dating apps were used to lure LGBTIQ+ victims to public places, where they were assaulted or robbed. Some attacks were also filmed and shared on social media. Those carrying out these attacks were predominantly young men, with some as young as 13 years old. These attacks are appalling.

As more incidents have come to light, the scale of the problem has become clearer. Between January 2024 and October 2025, Victoria Police recorded 95 app-facilitated offences.

The true number of attacks could be much more than we know. A range of barriers can make LGBTIQ+ victims reluctant to report their experiences to police, while data collection and recording of incidents is limited. People should feel confident that when they report anti-LGBTIQ+ behaviour to the police, they will be taken seriously and supported through the justice system.

This Inquiry identified practical ways to strengthen that response – from better policing and easier navigation of the justice system, to laws that recognise hate-motivated offending and alternative pathways, such as restorative justice.

However, effective policing and justice responses are only part of the solution. Prevention before the behaviour becomes a crime is critical. Education has an important role to play. Done well, it can challenge misconceptions and help the public understand what hate crime is and how to report it – but it needs to be developed carefully.

Stronger safety measures on dating apps are also particularly important. While platforms have taken steps to improve safety, there is more to do, particularly around age and identity verification, safety warnings, reporting, and cooperating with police.

I thank everyone who engaged with this Inquiry, particularly those who shared their personal experiences. I recognise how difficult it must have been to revisit and recount these experiences. I commend the courage shown in doing so and acknowledge the important contribution this evidence made to the Inquiry.

I also thank my fellow Committee Members for their work throughout this Inquiry and acknowledge the contribution of the Secretariat: Sylvette Bassy, Julie Barnes, Fred Toll, Jessica Summers and Patrick O'Brien.



Joe McCracken MLC
Chair

Findings and recommendations

1 Understanding anti-LGBTIQA+ behaviour in Victoria

FINDING 1: Anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment is not a new phenomenon. What has changed in recent years is how technology platforms, including dating apps and social media, are being used to facilitate criminal behaviour against LGBTIQA+ Victorians. 5

FINDING 2: A ‘hate crime’ is when a crime is wholly or partially motivated by prejudice and hatred towards a protected attribute. 7

FINDING 3: There is no nationally consistent definition of hate crime in Australia. 7

RECOMMENDATION 1: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government to adopt a nationally consistent definition of hate crime. 7

FINDING 4: A significant typology of those committing anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes is ‘thrillseeking’. 8

FINDING 5: LGBTIQA+ people from some newer migrant, culturally diverse and multi-faith communities are particularly vulnerable to app-based attacks and extortion. This contributes to under-reporting and difficulty in evidence gathering. 9

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the Victorian Government provide funding for LGBTIQA+ health and community outreach programs targeted to newer migrant, culturally diverse and multi-faith communities. 9

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the Victorian Government provide appropriate resourcing to community-led organisations, to allow for anonymous, after-hours and integrated case management support options, to meet the diverse and intersecting needs of the people they support. 10

RECOMMENDATION 4: That the Victorian Government work with Rainbow Mob and community organisations to address high levels of underreporting and self-determine an integrated, culturally appropriate response to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crime. 10

RECOMMENDATION 5: That the Victorian Government invest in community-led efforts working to address violence against trans people, including within intimate relationship contexts, while also recognising the disproportionate rates of online hate and violence perpetrated against trans people.

10

FINDING 6: The impacts of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes are felt beyond the victim of the attack. For many, it impacts a sense of safety and limits the ability to participate in broader society.

10

FINDING 7: Current data collection is insufficient to understand the true extent of anti-LGBTIQA+ behaviour and criminal conduct.

13

FINDING 8: App-based attacks are continuing, with publicly reported arrests in August 2026 in relation to 11 alleged attacks in south-east Melbourne.

13

RECOMMENDATION 6: That the Victorian Government provide investment to work with the community to further research on anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes, including research that improves understanding of LGBTIQA+ victim-survivors' experiences of violence, reporting and support.

13

RECOMMENDATION 7: That the Victorian Government work with the Commonwealth Government and Latrobe University to ensure continued funding for the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, to facilitate its data collection of hate and prejudice against LGBTIQA+ communities.

13

FINDING 9: Combatting anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes requires cooperation between all levels of government, international bodies and technology platforms.

14

2 Responses to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes

FINDING 10: Some victim-survivors of anti-LGBTIQA+ crimes do not report their experiences to Victoria Police because they lack confidence that they will be believed, supported or receive an effective response.

17

RECOMMENDATION 8: That the Victorian Government support investment in trusted LGBTIQ+ community organisations to implement reporting mechanisms that are able to provide trauma-informed support to victim-survivors during a report or disclosure, including referrals to other appropriate supports.

17

FINDING 11: In some instances, hate crimes, including some occurring in family violence contexts, are not recognised or recorded as hate crimes.

19

RECOMMENDATION 9: That the Victorian Government work with Victoria Police to develop practical tools specifically for identifying anti-LGBTIQ+ crimes. This should support the consistent identification of prejudice, recording and response to hate-motivated offending. These tools should draw on best practice from other jurisdictions.

19

RECOMMENDATION 10: That Victoria Police update its recording system to include intrafamilial hate motivation, or similar, as a dedicated recording category. This should be supported by guidance to assist frontline officers in identifying and recording these offences.

19

RECOMMENDATION 11: That Victoria Police explore the feasibility of a mandatory secondary review of reports classified as 'other' to improve the accuracy of hate crime recording.

20

RECOMMENDATION 12: That the Victorian Government increase investment in LGBTIQ+ family violence prevention in acknowledgement of identity-based violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ people within family violence contexts.

20

RECOMMENDATION 13: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government for further development of the Australian Institute of Criminology's National Hate Crime Database to better capture hate crimes against LGBTIQ+ communities.

20

FINDING 12: The introduction of a mandatory LGBTIQ+-inclusive practice training module for all Victoria Police employees is a positive step towards strengthening its response to anti-LGBTIQ+ criminal behaviour.

21

RECOMMENDATION 14: That the Victorian Government commission an independent evaluation of Victoria Police’s LGBTIQ+ awareness training and the extent to which it equips officers to identify and charge hate-motivated offending. **21**

FINDING 13: Victoria Police does not currently support the establishment of a dedicated hate crimes unit, instead preferring a statewide policing model supported by specialist areas and taskforces where required. **22**

FINDING 14: LGBTIQ+ Liaison Officers play an important role in supporting the building of trust between LGBTIQ+ communities and Victoria Police. **23**

FINDING 15: Victoria Police advised that it has more than 600 LGBTIQ+ Liaison Officers across the State. **23**

FINDING 16: Independent oversight mechanisms, such as a ‘Scrutiny Panel’ or similar body, could strengthen accountability, improve police practice and increase community confidence in police responses to hate crimes. **24**

RECOMMENDATION 15: That the Victorian Government consider the feasibility of establishing a ‘Scrutiny Panel’ or similar body and report publicly on its findings. **24**

FINDING 17: Victim-survivors often face significant barriers navigating the justice and support systems, which can limit access to support and discourage continued engagement with the justice process. **26**

RECOMMENDATION 16: That the Victorian Government establish a pilot Justice Navigator program to provide victim-survivors with a single, trusted point of contact to help them understand their rights, access support services and navigate the justice system, with outcomes publicly reported. **26**

RECOMMENDATION 17: That the Victorian Government explore the feasibility of amending the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) to introduce aggravated hate-based offences. **27**

FINDING 18: Victoria's 'post and boast' laws address the filming and sharing of offending, rather than the prejudice motivating the crimes. There is not yet sufficient evidence to demonstrate the impact existing post and boast laws have had on reducing anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes.

28

RECOMMENDATION 18: That the Victorian Government consider amending the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) to ensure that the publication of aggravated hate-based offences is covered by 'post and boast' laws.

28

FINDING 19: Some victim-survivors seek forms of justice beyond prosecution. Restorative justice may provide a safe, trauma-informed and complementary pathway to meet those needs.

29

RECOMMENDATION 19: That the Victorian Government consider establishing a pilot restorative justice program, co-designed with LGBTIQA+ communities.

29

RECOMMENDATION 20: That the Victorian Government consider establishing a Board of Inquiry into historical violence, discrimination and stigma against LGBTIQA+ communities in Victoria, and consider an appropriate redress pathway and reform to the historical homosexual convictions scheme.

29

FINDING 20: Trusted LGBTIQA+ community organisations are fundamental to supporting victim-survivors and are uniquely placed to deliver safe support and connect people with formal services.

30

RECOMMENDATION 21: That the Victorian Government review funding to community organisations to ensure they are adequately and securely resourced to meet growing demand.

30

RECOMMENDATION 22: That the Victorian Government invest in partnership building and practice leadership between LGBTIQA+ organisations and family violence, employment, housing and alcohol and other drug services, to increase referral pathways, sector integration and the capacity of the social supports sector to provide care to LGBTIQA+ people.

30

FINDING 21: Timely financial support is essential to assist the recovery for victim-survivors of crime, including hate crimes. Some stakeholders spoke about barriers within the current Financial Assistance Scheme that may prevent some victim-survivors from accessing the support they need.

31

RECOMMENDATION 23: That the Victorian Government increase funding for community legal centres to provide legal support for victim-survivors of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes, including support to access the Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme.

31

RECOMMENDATION 24: That the Victorian Government, in considering the recommendations of the Independent Review of the Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme, consider reform to the *Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance Scheme) Act 2022* to allow victim-survivors to make reports to trusted medical professionals or support services instead of requiring reports to police.

31

FINDING 22: Experts told the Committee of concern for an increased terror threat against LGBTIQA+ communities in Australia.

32

RECOMMENDATION 25: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government to ensure that national anti-terror preparedness settings consider threats against LGBTIQA+ communities.

32

3 Preventing anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes

FINDING 23: Some responses to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes have been effective, including by areas of Victoria Police, victim-survivor support groups and community legal centres. This effectiveness could be improved by greater central coordination between disparate bodies.

35

RECOMMENDATION 26: That the Victorian Government consider developing a whole-of-government hate crimes prevention strategy, as part of the broader crime prevention strategy. This should be developed in partnership with the LGBTIQA+ community.

35

FINDING 24: School education initiatives are important tools which can facilitate conversations and improve equality outcomes for the LGBTIQA+ community.

37

RECOMMENDATION 27: That the Victorian Government expand inclusion and respectful relationships education in schools to ensure they are effectively representing LGBTIQ+ identities and providing alternatives to harmful gender norms.

37

FINDING 25: Traditional responses to hate crimes, including incarceration, can be ineffective at preventing or deterring hate crimes. As well, these responses can further radicalise young men.

39

RECOMMENDATION 28: That the Victorian Government develop and implement hate crime diversion and deradicalisation programs, including within the Violence Reduction Unit, with a particular focus on young men. These programs should focus upon rehabilitation and the reintegration of offenders into society.

39

RECOMMENDATION 29: That the Victorian Government support community-led social campaigns that address the drivers of anti-LGBTIQ+ violence, developed in partnership with relevant expertise from LGBTIQ+ violence prevention, gender equity, men's health and youth organisations.

39

FINDING 26: Harmful online content has been utilised to perpetuate violence against LGBTIQ+ communities.

40

RECOMMENDATION 30: That the Victorian Government expand media literacy education in schools to support the identification of dis- and misinformation.

40

FINDING 27: Digital platforms are not passive hosts of content but actively shape what users see in ways that could amplify anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiment.

41

FINDING 28: Stakeholders argued that social media platforms should take greater responsibility in helping to reduce the harmful targeting of the LGBTIQ+ community on their platforms.

41

FINDING 29: Stronger moderation of online content should target material that incites violence or causes harm without restricting legitimate expression or political debate.

42

RECOMMENDATION 31: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government to ensure that digital platforms are being held accountable for the role they play in enabling anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes.

42

FINDING 30: The Committee acknowledges Grindr and Match Group’s participation in the Inquiry and notes its disappointment that other apps did not participate.

43

RECOMMENDATION 32: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government for a dedicated inquiry into best practice safety features of dating apps utilised by Australian users, working towards the following goals as associated outcomes for applications operating in Australia:

- a. Ensure everyone on an adult service can be confident the other users are adults.
- b. Maintain that no user must disclose or display their identity to use these services or is marked out for declining.
- c. Action is taken to identify and ban fake profiles and the users who operate them.
- d. Ensure that evidence still exists when law enforcement requests it, without creating need for services to hold additional data of all users.
- e. Improve reporting capability without compromising user protections from online harm.
- f. Implement changes such that the public can see whether these systems work.
- g. Ensure that regulations are consistently mandated across the sector.

43

FINDING 31: Some dating apps, such as Grindr, have strengthened their age and identity verification measures to improve user safety, with early evidence that these measures are reducing under-age access. However, no verification system is foolproof and determined malicious actors may still find ways to circumvent safeguards. Further, some offenders use their real identities.

45

FINDING 32: Age and identity verification for LGBTIQA+ dating apps is a difficult balance between user safety and the desire of many users for anonymity.

45

FINDING 33: Dating apps can play an important role in improving user safety through timely in-app warnings, safety messaging and reporting prompts. Measures include ongoing safety messaging, user education and additional in-app safety features.

46

FINDING 34: Effective in-app reporting and moderation systems are critical to preventing repeat offending and protecting users from further harm. 47

FINDING 35: While some dating apps have strengthened their reporting systems and demonstrated good practice, reporting mechanisms remain inconsistent across platforms and could be improved. 47

RECOMMENDATION 33: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government to mandate evidence preservation by default for hate-related content removed by platforms, maintained in law enforcement-accessible archives to support investigation and prosecution. 47

FINDING 36: Effective cooperation between dating apps and law enforcement depends on timely information sharing, clear information requests and systems that enable platforms to support investigations while protecting users' privacy 48

FINDING 37: The Committee is disappointed that the federal eSafety Commissioner declined to participate in this Inquiry. 49

FINDING 38: The Voluntary Australian Online Dating Code of Conduct establishes minimum safety standards for participating dating apps. However, compliance is voluntary and cannot be legally enforced by the Commonwealth Government. 49

RECOMMENDATION 34: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government to ensure that all dating apps operating in Australia become signatories to an enforceable and strengthened Australian Online Dating Code. This should ensure other apps that have been implicated in offending, such as Snapchat, be included. 49

FINDING 39: Victoria has introduced new criminal offences targeting the most serious forms of vilification. Stakeholders expressed strong support for the laws. However, there is not yet sufficient evidence to assess their impact on reducing anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes. 51

FINDING 40: Several stakeholders supported introducing a positive duty to prevent vilification, thereby shifting Victoria's approach from responding to harm after it occurs to preventing vilification before it escalates. 52

FINDING 41: The Commonwealth's review of the *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) recommended an enforceable digital duty of care requiring online platforms to proactively identify and mitigate systemic harms. The Commonwealth has committed to legislating this.

52

RECOMMENDATION 35: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government to consider ways in which it can hold platforms liable for algorithms driving people to hateful content that incites violence.

52

What happens next?

There are several stages to a parliamentary inquiry.

The Committee conducts the Inquiry

This report on the Inquiry into anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes in Victoria is the result of extensive research and consultation by the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee.

The Committee received written submissions, spoke with people at the public hearings, reviewed research evidence and deliberated over a number of meetings. A range of stakeholders expressed their views directly to us as Members of Parliament.

A Parliamentary Committee is not part of the Government. The Committee is a group of members of different political parties (including independent members). Parliament has asked us to look closely at an issue and report back. This process helps Parliament do its work by encouraging public debate and involvement in issues.

You can learn more about the Committee's work at: <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/lpic-lc>.

The report is presented to Parliament

This report was presented to Parliament and can be found at: <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/antilgbtqiahatecrimes/reports>.

A response from the Government

The Government has six months to respond in writing to any recommendations made in this report.

The response is public and put on the inquiry page of Parliament's website when it is received at: <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/antilgbtqiahatecrimes/reports>.

In its response, the Government indicates whether it supports the Committee's recommendations. It can also outline actions it may take.

Chapter 1

Understanding anti-LGBTIQA+ behaviour in Victoria

1.1 Overview

This Chapter explains the background to this Inquiry: the growth of criminal behaviour being committed against members of the LGBTIQA+ community in Victoria. These crimes have been facilitated by social media and dating apps.

The Chapter explains that hate crimes involve actions against individuals and communities. It concludes with a brief discussion on ideas around the best ways of preventing and responding to these crimes, setting up the remaining two Chapters in this Report.

The Committee was tasked with examining a wide scope of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate and criminal behaviour within a confined timeframe. This Report primarily focuses on the events that immediately precipitated the Inquiry, that being the dating app-facilitated attacks which have escalated over the past few years. While other types of anti-LGBTIQA+ conduct particularly directed at other cohorts within the community are examined most closely, the elements drawn into focus within this Report should not be seen in any way to diminish other forms of anti-LGBTIQA+ behaviour.

Thorne Harbour Health's Submission stated:

The hostility normalising anti-LGBTIQA+ violence is not new. It is continuous with historical harms perpetrated and sanctioned by state institutions: the criminalisation of same-sex intimacy and gender diversity, police entrapment, public humiliation through the courts, removal of children from lesbian mothers, and broader institutional neglect and stigma. These were features of a social and legal order that treated LGBTIQA+ people as legitimate targets for state and private violence.

One community member shared the cumulative impact of a lifetime of harms. He recounted a physical and sexual assault, and an attempted murder, in the 1980s—for which the perpetrator received only a good behaviour bond, instilling a lasting scepticism in the justice system. He later described blatant discrimination and threats from healthcare providers, which entrenched his feelings of institutional prejudice and lack of confidence in systems that are meant to protect us.

This history is a direct and continuing cause of the severe under-reporting and mistrust of police that characterise anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes today. If Victoria is serious about improving reporting pathways and rebuilding trust, it must reckon with the institutional conditions that produced that mistrust.¹

¹ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 28.

1.2 Background to the Inquiry

1.2.1 Evidence received by the Committee

The Legislative Council referred this Inquiry to the Legal and Social Issues Committee on 18 February 2026. The Committee received 84 submissions and held two days of hearings in June 2026.

The submissions can be read on the Committee's website: <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/antilgbtqiahatecrimes/submissions>.

The transcripts from the hearings can also be read on the Committee's website: <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/antilgbtqiahatecrimes/hearings>.

The Committee thanks everyone who gave evidence. It particularly appreciates witnesses who had to recall very traumatic experiences to help the Committee better understand this issue. The Committee heard:

The victims who have shared their experiences with this Inquiry, and with Thorne Harbour Health, are asking for something specific. They want the law to recognise what happened to them as a hate crime. They want police to investigate it as one. They want practical support that does not depend on a reporting pathway many cannot safely use. And they want the conditions that produced their attackers—radicalisation, ideological grooming, unaccountable platforms—to be addressed before more people absorb the same content and act on it.²

1.2.2 Dating-app facilitated attacks against LGBTIQ+ Victorians

The Committee's Inquiry was established in response to a spike in targeted violent attacks on predominantly gay and bisexual men in Victoria, in particular since 2024.³ This included 95 reported attacks and resulted in 42 arrests.⁴ Evidence noted that these attacks were concentrated in peri-urban areas, including outer northern and south-eastern Melbourne,⁵ and primarily perpetrated by cisgendered young men.⁶

The Committee heard that many of these attacks were facilitated through luring people through online dating apps, including but not limited to Grindr. Users would

² Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 30.

³ Chad Hughes, Chief Executive Officer, Thorne Harbour Health, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Assistant Commissioner Brett Curran, Partnerships and Safe Communities, Victoria Police, public hearing, Melbourne, 25 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26; Jeremy Oliver, Manager, LGBTIQ+ Communities Portfolio, Priority and Safer Communities Division, Victoria Police, public hearing, Melbourne, 25 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26.

⁶ Jenna Tuke, Chief Executive Officer, Switchboard Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Professor Adam Bourne, Director, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22.

often be lured to meet in a public place by a false account and then attacked.⁷ The Committee heard that these attacks included:

- physical and verbal assault⁸
- robbery and extortion⁹
- the filming of attacks to be shared online, within communication networks, including on Telegram, and more widely on social media, including Instagram, Facebook and TikTok.¹⁰

David Brown, a victim-survivor of a dating app-facilitated attack, shared his experience in a public hearing:

It happened at 5 o'clock in broad daylight in open public places, so this is not something that happened to me in a place that was dark and secluded. It is real, it is out there and they did not care. They did not care about getting caught, because they did not see that they were doing anything wrong. They turned up to a park with a knife bigger than any of you have in your kitchen and held it to me and did not see any problem with that. It was just pure hatred. Now, they did try and rob me, but it was clear that was not their motivation. They were just there to live this out... While I was in the waiting room for emergency, I saw their profile reappear with a new profile. They were ready to do it again.¹¹

As a result, these attacks have been widely labelled in the media as the 'Grindr attacks'.¹² The Committee heard evidence that this label is inaccurate, as:

- harm has been perpetuated via a number of dating apps and social media platforms, rather than just on Grindr¹³
- the label concentrates responsibility for the attacks onto an app as an access point, rather than focusing on individual perpetrators.¹⁴

The Committee heard that attacks in Victoria have formed part of a global phenomenon of app-based violence, particularly against gay men and transgender women. The Director of Trust and Safety for Grindr, Priyanka Purkayastha, told the Committee that, for example, when Australia records a spike in offending, 'it does not mean that the UK will also', but that there are sometimes 'seasonal rise[s]' through avenues such as TikTok viral trends.¹⁵

⁷ Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6.

⁸ Chad Hughes, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6.

⁹ Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6; Jeremy Oliver, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30.

¹⁰ Caleb Hawk, Deputy Director, Health Promotion and Community Engagement, Thorne Harbour Health, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9; Jarryd Bartle, Lecturer, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT, public hearing, Melbourne, 25 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 14–15.

¹¹ David Brown, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2025, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40.

¹² Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2.

¹³ Ibid, p. 6; Cassandra Martin, Managing Lawyer, Q+Law, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 32; Jeremy Oliver, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33.

¹⁴ Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 2–3.

¹⁵ Priyanka Purkayastha, Director, Trust and Safety, Grindr, public hearing, Melbourne, 25 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4.

A more accurate term for the attacks investigated by this Inquiry is ‘dating app-facilitated attacks’.

1.2.3 Technology landscapes have helped to fuel violence

The Committee heard evidence that technology landscapes, including on dating apps and social media, have aided in the ‘coordination and amplification’ of anti-LGBTIQA+ violence in Victoria.¹⁶ In particular, evidence noted that anti-LGBTIQA+ violence has been amplified by social media algorithms and advances in artificial intelligence (AI).¹⁷

Evidence noted that social media algorithms amplify extreme content, including anti-LGBTIQA+ content.¹⁸ Dr Josh Roose, Associate Professor of Politics at Deakin University, told the Committee that social media sites have been ‘inundated by hatred’ as a result.¹⁹ Combined with an increased amount of time spent online by young people, Dr Roose noted that this has created a ‘perfect storm’ for the promotion of anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment online and its manifestation as hate crimes.²⁰

Joe Ball, the Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities, also identified a notable increase in death threats, graffiti, harassment, vilification and abuse.²¹

The Committee heard that users of social media, in particular young men, are being ‘pushed’ towards harmful content, without necessarily engaging with this content.²² Online communities can, at times, promote violent, disrespectful and anti-LGBTIQA+ content, often presented as solutions to male insecurities around fitness, dating and mental health.²³

Merrin Wake, a rural Victorian who is a mother of a trans son, shared her experience of toxic online environments in a public hearing:

‘You should hold your kid’s head under the water until the bubbles stop. Your child should be taken away from you and put in foster care. You are a worthless waste of life and someone should punch you in the face.’ These are just some of the messages I get daily online. And then in February this year, my child received a death threat. I say that plainly because anything less softens the truth. It is not abstract or political; it is my child.²⁴

¹⁶ Joe Ball, Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities, public hearing, Melbourne, 25 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 37.

¹⁷ Respect Victoria, *Submission 81*, p. 8; Priyanka Purkayastha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 55.

¹⁸ Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 46*, p. 15; Respect Victoria, *Submission 81*, p. 8.

¹⁹ Dr Josh Roose, Associate Professor of Politics, Deakin University, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 66.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 70.

²¹ Joe Ball, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 36–37.

²² Respect Victoria, *Submission 81*, p. 8.

²³ *Ibid*.

²⁴ Merrin Wake, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39.

Caleb Hawke, Deputy Director of Communications, Public Relations, Content Production and LGBTIQA+ Health Promotion at Thorne Harbour Health, noted that some online environments are built around committing acts of violence, including encouraging users to ‘post and boast’ videos.²⁵ Jarryd Bartle, Lecturer at the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies at RMIT, told the Committee that some perpetrators are inspired to replicate ‘vigilante justice’ videos, in which LGBTIQA+ people are assaulted on the pretence that they are paedophiles, intending to meet with an under-age user of a dating app.²⁶

Joe Hack, Head of Global Government Affairs at Grindr, noted advances in AI as one of the ‘greatest threats’ to fuelling anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment.²⁷ The Committee heard that advances in generative AI have allowed malicious actors to significantly increase the scale of violence spread online, inundating the LGBTIQA+ community with greater levels of threats, as well as creating ‘resource challenges’ for platforms to respond.²⁸

In a public hearing, Tony Briffa, former Mayor of Hobsons Bay City Council, who has ‘lived experience as a trans and gender-diverse person’,²⁹ told the Committee how AI has been used to generate malicious images of them on social media. She described this as ‘misgendering on quite a high level... I mean, it is a form of assault’.³⁰

However, the Committee consistently heard that these technology landscapes are not responsible for creating the underlying drivers for anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment. Rather, these platforms can facilitate and amplify longstanding anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment.³¹ Chad Hughes, Chief Executive Officer of Thorne Harbour Health, told the Committee:

This is not something that has just started in the last two years. The modality is new, but the hatred against our people from our communities has been with humans for generations and centuries.³²

Significantly, the Committee was told that rising violence and increased threats towards LGBTIQA+ communities is not unique to Victoria or Australia. Evidence noted that Victoria’s experience of anti-LGBTIQA+ behaviour ‘must be understood in the wider global context’ in which LGBTIQA+ people are increasingly becoming targets.³³

FINDING 1: Anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment is not a new phenomenon. What has changed in recent years is how technology platforms, including dating apps and social media, are being used to facilitate criminal behaviour against LGBTIQA+ Victorians.

²⁵ Caleb Hawk, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9.

²⁶ Jarryd Bartle, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

²⁷ Joe Hack, Head, Global Government Affairs, Grindr, public hearing, Melbourne, 25 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Tony Briffa, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 54.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

³¹ Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 46*, p. 7.

³² Chad Hughes, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6.

³³ Dr Josh Roose, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 64.

1.3 Defining hate crimes

1.3.1 What is a ‘hate crime’?

The Committee heard evidence from Geoffrey Steer, who was responsible for establishing and heading the New South Wales Police Force Hate Crimes Unit. Mr Steer explained that a hate crime can be defined as a ‘criminal offence that is wholly or partially motivated by bias towards a protected category’.³⁴

Mr Steer noted that a hate crime is to be understood as a crime that has been fuelled by hate, rather than a criminalisation of the hate itself:

Hate crimes policing is not about thoughts and beliefs. It is about crossing that line... it is about violence. You can believe what you want; you are entitled to that, but you do not have the right to cross over from your belief system and to cause harm to another person. And that is where hate crime draws the line in the sand.³⁵

The Committee heard consistently that thoughts, beliefs, criticism and legitimate public debate for or against particular groups are not hate crimes.

Heather Corkhill, Legal Director at Equality Australia, told the Committee that ‘hatred has to go beyond... mere dislike or distaste for a person’.³⁶ She also noted that a legal understanding of hate crimes recognises that these acts ‘have absolutely already been crimes’.³⁷

Commissioner Ball noted that key to understanding hate crimes is ‘putting the hate component within the crime’.³⁸ Assistant Commissioner Brett Curran of Victoria Police echoed this understanding at a public hearing, saying: ‘Someone would have to undertake a criminal activity in the context of a protected attribute, and that would make it a crime. Not agreeing with something is not a crime.’³⁹

The Committee heard that there is no nationally agreed definition of a hate crime. Dr Justin Ellis, Senior Lecturer at the School of Law and Justice, University of Newcastle, told the Committee that adopting a nationally consistent definition of a hate crime would be a ‘starting point’ to combatting anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes in Australia.⁴⁰

³⁴ Geoffrey Steer, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 65.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 69.

³⁶ Heather Corkhill, Legal Director, Equality Australia, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Joe Ball, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39.

³⁹ Assistant Commissioner Brett Curran, Partnerships and Safe Communities, Victoria Police, public hearing, Melbourne, 25 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30.

⁴⁰ Dr Justin Ellis, Senior Lecturer, School of Law and Justice, University of Newcastle, public hearing, Melbourne, 25 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

FINDING 2: A ‘hate crime’ is when a crime is wholly or partially motivated by prejudice and hatred towards a protected attribute.

FINDING 3: There is no nationally consistent definition of hate crime in Australia.

RECOMMENDATION 1: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government to adopt a nationally consistent definition of hate crime.

1.3.2 Typologies of offenders of hate crimes

Geoffrey Steer outlined five key offender typologies of those who commit hate crimes, represented in Table 1.1:

Table 1.1 Hate crime offender typologies

Typology	Critical components
Thrillseeking	• Driven by excitement, status and group bonding • Attacks often opportunistic, with minimal planning and victims chosen for convenience rather than personal grievance • High repeat offending potential, due to low inhibition and group contagion
Defensive	• Driven by a perceived ‘threat’ to territory, identity or social order • Attacks moderately planned, targeted at newcomers, minorities or groups symbolising demographic change • Escalation likely if perceived ‘threat’ remains or community narratives reinforce grievance
Retaliatory	• Driven by an emotional response, often revenge, for a triggering event (often misinterpreted or rumoured) • Attacks can be impulsive or planned, against symbolic representatives of the group blamed for the triggering event • Highly volatile threat level, spiking around triggering events
Mission	• Driven by an ideological or extremist belief system driving a perceived ‘duty’ to act against a target group • Attacks highly planned, targeting symbolic victims, using violence to spread fear and send a message • Highest lethality potential
Intrafamilial	• Driven by the enforcement and preservation of family reputation and honour, the suppression of a perceived identity ‘deviance’ • Targeting family members, including through surveillance, isolation and coercive control • High levels of severity and concealment, with elevated misclassification risk (family violence versus hate crime)

Source: Geoffrey Steer, *Submission 19*, pp. 20–25.

Mr Steer noted that:

Thrillseeking is generally the main typology that targets the LGBTIQ community, and if memory serves me right, it is about 60 to 75 per cent of offenders that fall into that thrillseeker category. Thrillseekers are not ideologically driven. A strong societal response generally changes the behaviour or reduces the behaviour⁴¹

This evidence notes that the LGBTIQ+ community is targeted largely by thrillseekers, mainly due to the relative permissibility of homophobic acts in society. It was also noted that there is usually a higher propensity among the LGBTIQ+ community to not report a crime, largely due to a mistrust of police, fears of shame and being 'outed'.⁴²

FINDING 4: A significant typology of those committing anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes is 'thrillseeking'.

1.3.3 Disproportionate impact on diverse LGBTIQ+ communities

Some people from certain communities are disproportionately impacted by anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes in Victoria. Thorne Harbour Health told the Committee that 'the impacts fall most severely on people who experience intersecting forms of marginalisation including trans and gender-diverse people, Rainbow Mob, and LGBTIQ+ people from multicultural and multifaith communities'.⁴³

In particular, LGBTIQ+ people from some culturally diverse backgrounds face the risks of being 'outed' by their attackers.⁴⁴ Switchboard CEO Jenna Tuke told the Committee that there have been cases where overseas students from countries where homosexuality is illegal have been extorted for tens of thousands of dollars and threatened to have their identity shared with friends and family if they do not comply.⁴⁵

Highlighting the risk to this cohort of people, there is an apparent geographic correlation between where clusters of attacks have taken place and the prevalence of newer migrant communities, such as the outer northern and south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. The Committee heard that targeted and localised initiatives were essential for supporting these communities.⁴⁶

Daniel Powell, a gay First Nations man, spoke to higher rates of suicide-related behaviour among both LBGTIQ+ and First Nations communities. He also cautioned against treating the LGBTIQ+ community as a monolith, noting that each part of the community faces a 'diversity of experience' and should be given 'specific recognition and targeted response[s]'.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Geoffrey Steer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 67.

⁴² Ibid, p. 71; Jarryd Bartle, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

⁴³ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 22.

⁴⁵ Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6.

⁴⁶ Drummond Street Services, *Submission 63*, pp. 8-9; Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) *Submission 55*, p. 12.

⁴⁷ Daniel Powell, *Submission 37*, p. 4.

Transgender Victoria told the Committee that data on trans and gender-diverse people has been lacking, and that questions on gender and sexuality were asked for the first time in the recent 2026 Census.⁴⁸ The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society's Private Lives surveys have shown that violence and hate crimes towards trans and gender-diverse people are increasing.⁴⁹

Switchboard's submission stated:

In particular, trans women and transfeminine people in relationships with cisgender men may experience identity based, prejudicial violence from their intimate partner due to pervasive societal ideas that transfeminine people are not suitable partners for cisgender men. The Transfemme project outlines how hateful anti-trans attitudes may impact trans women and transfeminine people who are in relationships with cisgender men.⁵⁰

Professor Adam Bourne further noted that people living with disabilities do not receive as much attention within conversations about hate crime.⁵¹ He noted that in recent surveys of disabled LGBTIQ+ people, more than two-fifths experienced verbal abuse, one-fifth experienced threats of physical violence and 6.1% experienced an assault.⁵²

Daniel Powell's submission stated:

These two identities are not separate parts of me that I move between; they exist together, shaping how I understand myself and how I move through the world. I am fortunate to have found community in both spaces, though I am also aware that not all Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ people have experienced that same sense of acceptance and belonging, and that navigating both identities can involve its own particular challenges.⁵³

FINDING 5: LGBTIQ+ people from some newer migrant, culturally diverse and multi-faith communities are particularly vulnerable to app-based attacks and extortion. This contributes to under-reporting and difficulty in evidence gathering.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the Victorian Government provide funding for LGBTIQ+ health and community outreach programs targeted to newer migrant, culturally diverse and multi-faith communities.

⁴⁸ Transgender Victoria, *Submission 48*, p. 7.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 12.

⁵⁰ Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 70*, p. 12.

⁵¹ Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 23-24.

⁵² Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, *Submission 69*, p. 20.

⁵³ Daniel Powell, *Submission 37*, p. 2.

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the Victorian Government provide appropriate resourcing to community-led organisations, to allow for anonymous, after-hours and integrated case management support options, to meet the diverse and intersecting needs of the people they support.

RECOMMENDATION 4: That the Victorian Government work with Rainbow Mob and community organisations to address high levels of underreporting and self-determine an integrated, culturally appropriate response to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime.

RECOMMENDATION 5: That the Victorian Government invest in community-led efforts working to address violence against trans people, including within intimate relationship contexts, while also recognising the disproportionate rates of online hate and violence perpetrated against trans people.

1.3.4 Hate crimes have a wider effect

The Committee heard consistently that the impact of hate crimes is not isolated to the direct victim of an attack.⁵⁴ Instead, hate crimes have longstanding impacts on the dignity, safety and sense of belonging on the wider LGBTIQ+ community, referred to as a ‘ripple effect’.⁵⁵

Adjunct Professor Nicole Asquith, from the School of Justice at the Queensland University of Technology, told the Committee that this ripple effect ‘short-circuits’ the participation of LGBTIQ+ people in public life.⁵⁶

Professor Adam Bourne, Director of the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University, told the Committee that when hate crimes are committed against LGBTIQ+ people, communities carry significant levels of psychological distress and suicidality.⁵⁷ For Professor Bourne, this mental health impact is ‘one of the most central harms of a hate crime’.⁵⁸

FINDING 6: The impacts of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes are felt beyond the victim of the attack. For many, it impacts a sense of safety and limits the ability to participate in broader society.

⁵⁴ Daniel Powell, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 50.

⁵⁵ Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15; Adjunct Professor Nicole Asquith, School of Justice, Queensland University of Technology, public hearing, Melbourne, 25 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16.

⁵⁶ Adjunct Professor Nicole Asquith, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16.

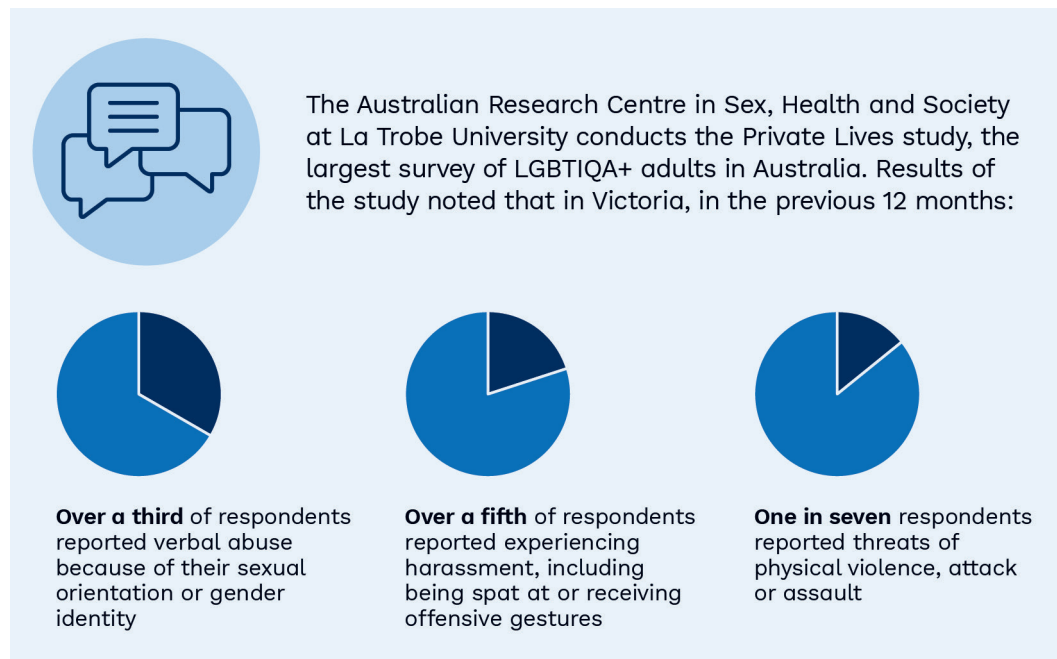
⁵⁷ Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

1.4 How widespread are anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes in Victoria?

The Committee heard evidence from academics and LGBTIQA+ advocacy and support organisations that anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment is growing in Victoria and that hateful attitudes are dangerously close to becoming ‘normalised’.⁵⁹ In its submission, Switchboard Victoria noted that LGBTIQA+ people are twice as likely to experience online hate compared to the national average.⁶⁰

Figure 1.1 Private Lives survey results, 2019



Source: Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

While this research indicates that anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment is rising, the Committee heard that current data collection is insufficient to create an accurate understanding of the true extent of LGBTIQA+ hate in Victoria.⁶¹ Professor Adam Bourne told the Committee that the LGBTIQA+ community had not ‘up until this year, been included in the census’, and are ‘rarely counted in the vast majority of spaces’.⁶² Adjunct Professor Nicole Asquith told the Committee that this information gap meant ‘we are trying to deal with a problem with no data’.⁶³

⁵⁹ Helen Bolton, Chief Executive Officer, Respect Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 25 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 55; Laura Vines, Manager, Prevention Policy and Influence, Respect Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 25 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 58.

⁶⁰ Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 70*, p. 11.

⁶¹ Chad Hughes, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5; Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6.

⁶² Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22.

⁶³ Adjunct Professor Nicole Asquith, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16.

Further, the Committee heard evidence that anti-LGBTIQA+ acts of violence are ‘substantially under-reported’ to police and through judicial pathways.⁶⁴ Evidence noted that historical persecution of the LGBTIQA+ community by the police and other institutions, as well as LGBTIQA+ people being dismissed and victim-blamed when reporting their experiences, has led to the LGBTIQA+ community being ‘hesitant’ to engage with law enforcement.⁶⁵ Fears of being blamed, dismissed and not believed by police are key barriers to LGBTIQA+ communities reporting criminal behaviour.⁶⁶

Moreover, Jarryd Bartle told the Committee that under-reporting also stemmed from Victoria Police ‘not classifying certain offences as prejudice motivated’.⁶⁷ The combined effect of these factors is that the true number of attacks is most likely far higher than the figures suggest.

To better understand the growth of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes in Victoria, the Committee heard that data needs to be better collected. Recommendations to help improve data collection included:

- The establishment of a community-led LGBTIQA+ hate crime survey or register (see Section 2.2.1)⁶⁸
- Reforming systems, including Victoria Police, to better capture data on LGBTIQA+ people (see Section 2.2.2)⁶⁹
- Providing assistance to LGBTIQA+ victim-survivors to navigate the justice system (see Section 2.3).⁷⁰

Highlighting the ongoing prevalence of the threat against LGBTIQA+ Victorians, in August 2026 five young men aged 16 to 18 were arrested in relation to a series of app-based attacks on gay men in Greater Dandenong, in south-east Melbourne.⁷¹

Over 11 reported attacks, the alleged offenders have been charged with kidnapping, sexual assault, intentionally causing injury and armed robbery. At the time of writing the police investigation remains ongoing.⁷²

⁶⁴ Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

⁶⁵ Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 70*, p. 5; Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9.

⁶⁶ Chad Hughes, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9; Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

⁶⁷ Jarryd Bartle, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

⁶⁸ Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23.

⁶⁹ Heather Corkhill, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

⁷⁰ Sebastian Sharp, Senior Lead, Policy and Community Legal Education, Q+Law, Fitzroy Legal Service, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27.

⁷¹ ‘Five arrested in Dandenong as police investigate alleged homophobic attacks across Victoria’ *ABC News*, 10 August 2026, <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-08-10/five-accused-of-homophobic-attacks-in-dandenong/107021732>> accessed 21 August 2026.

⁷² *Ibid.*

FINDING 7: Current data collection is insufficient to understand the true extent of anti-LGBTIQA+ behaviour and criminal conduct.

FINDING 8: App-based attacks are continuing, with publicly reported arrests in August 2026 in relation to 11 alleged attacks in south-east Melbourne.

RECOMMENDATION 6: That the Victorian Government provide investment to work with the community to further research on anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes, including research that improves understanding of LGBTIQA+ victim-survivors' experiences of violence, reporting and support.

RECOMMENDATION 7: That the Victorian Government work with the Commonwealth Government and Latrobe University to ensure continued funding for the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, to facilitate its data collection of hate and prejudice against LGBTIQA+ communities.

1.5 Responding to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes

Throughout the Inquiry, the Committee heard of the cross-jurisdictional nature of how anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes are inspired, planned and perpetrated. This means that preventing and responding to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes is a multi-jurisdictional responsibility.

The Australian eSafety Commissioner is responsible for the regulation of activity online. In particular, the Commissioner has the responsibility to protect Australians from online harms, promote positive digital spaces and hold service providers, including social media platforms, accountable for user safety.⁷³ The Committee heard that State bodies, including advocacy bodies,⁷⁴ Respect Victoria⁷⁵ and Victoria Police,⁷⁶ have engaged with the eSafety Commissioner in its response to the recent dating app-facilitated attacks.

For further discussion of online platform safety, see Section 3.4.

Dating apps are self-regulated under the Australian Online Dating Code of Conduct. The Code was developed by an Industry Working Group, with representatives from Match Group (Tinder, Hinge, Match.com), Grindr and Bumble working in partnership

⁷³ The Australian eSafety Commissioner, *Industry regulation*, December 2025 <<https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/industry-regulation>> accessed on 22 July 2026.

⁷⁴ Caleb Hawk, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11.

⁷⁵ Laura Vines, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 58.

⁷⁶ Assistant Commissioner Brett Curran, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23.

with the Commonwealth Government.⁷⁷ Mischa Barr from Jesuit Social Services noted that the voluntary nature of the Code means ‘there is no enforcement or compliance’ for non-compliant platforms.⁷⁸

For further discussion, see Section 3.5.

The Committee heard from several Victorian Departments, agencies and organisations who have responsibilities to prevent and respond to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes. These are outlined in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Victorian bodies with responsibilities preventing and responding to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crime

Body	Responsibilities
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	Delivering policies, programs and services that support LGBTIQA+ Victorians ⁷⁹
Respect Victoria	Preventing family violence and violence against women and gender-diverse people ⁸⁰
Victoria Police	Detecting, apprehending and disrupting offenders of anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes ⁸¹
Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities	Promoting the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQA+ Victorians ⁸²
LGBTIQA+ advocacy and support groups, including Switchboard Victoria and Thorne Harbour Health	Providing legal, mental health and judicial support to victims of LGBTIQA+ hate crimes ⁸³

Source: Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee.

Significantly, the online environment which has helped to facilitate the most recent wave of anti-LGBTIQA+ violence, as well as many of the groups, networks and individuals who have inspired attacks, operate internationally. The Committee notes that strong collaboration will be required between all levels of government in Australia and internationally to combat the growth of anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment.

FINDING 9: Combatting anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes requires cooperation between all levels of government, international bodies and technology platforms.

⁷⁷ Australia Online Dating Code of Conduct, *About the code*, July 2026 <<https://www.australianonlinedatingcode.com.au/about-the-code>> accessed on 22 July 2026.

⁷⁸ Mischa Barr, Lead, Policy and Advocacy, Jesuit Social Services, public hearing, Melbourne, 25 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

⁷⁹ The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 83*, p. 6.

⁸⁰ Respect Victoria, *Submission 81*, p. 4; Helen Bolton, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 55.

⁸¹ Assistant Commissioner Brett Curran, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23.

⁸² The Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities, *Submission 82*, p. 1.

⁸³ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 4; Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2.

Chapter 2

Responses to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes

2.1 Overview

It is important that policing and justice responses to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes appropriately meet the needs of victim-survivors. If not, they may be less likely to report offences to police or engage with the justice system. This not only denies access to justice but also contributes to the underreporting of criminal activity.

In this Chapter, the Committee explores how policing responses can be strengthened to help ensure these crimes are better reported, identified and responded to. The Committee also heard that there are opportunities to improve victim-survivors' experiences with the justice system, including by:

- making it easier to navigate
- introducing aggravated offences that recognise the hate-based nature of offending
- exploring restorative justice as an additional pathway for those seeking outcomes beyond a custodial response.

2.2 Policing responses

The Committee heard that historical experiences of criminalisation, discriminatory policing and institutional prejudice have shaped how LGBTIQA+ people interact with police. Stakeholders described the relationship between LGBTIQA+ communities and Victoria Police as 'complex and fragile',¹ emphasising that mistrust is both 'well-documented and historically grounded',² particularly within disproportionately impacted communities like Rainbow Mob and trans and gender-diverse communities.³

Trust in policing is essential because it influences whether people report criminal behaviour and whether their interactions with police compound the harm they have already experienced.

The Committee heard examples of police responding to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crime in a trauma-informed, respectful and supportive way.⁴ However, it also heard examples

¹ RMIT, *Submission 42.1*, p. 13.

² Daniel Powell, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 42.

³ Transgender Victoria, *Submission 48*, p. 10.

⁴ David Brown, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 40–43

where the policing response fell short of both community expectations and the actions needed by victims following a hate crime.⁵ This Section examines the evidence the Committee received about current policing responses, as well as opportunities to improve reporting, identification and future responses.

2.2.1 Better reporting

As noted in Section 1.4, anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes are most likely under-reported, with some believing it is not safe or worthwhile to report to police. Stakeholders identified a range of barriers, including a fear of not being believed, blamed or outed to family, employers or their faith community.⁶ Others described a lack of confidence that police or the justice system would respond effectively or hold perpetrators to account.⁷

The Committee heard that some felt that their experiences would not be taken seriously or that police would not recognise that what they had experienced constituted a crime.⁸ Stakeholders emphasised that reporting is not simply a matter of encouraging people to come forward, but of ensuring they believe ‘the system is safe, is competent and is capable of doing something useful’⁹ with the information they provide. While some witnesses acknowledged that policing practices have improved over time, they said the legacy of past treatment remains a significant barrier to reporting.¹⁰

At present, the formal pathway for reporting hate crimes is through Victoria Police. Reports can be made by calling police, attending a police station, using online reporting or the Police Assistance Line, or, less commonly, where offences are detected during patrols or other investigations.¹¹ This means that if a victim faces barriers to engaging with police, their experience may go unreported and remain absent from the data used to understand the prevalence of criminal behaviour and how these offences are occurring.

The Committee heard that there was broad support for expanding the ways people can report hate crimes. Many stakeholders advocated for an independent, community-based third-party reporting system that would allow LGBTIQA+ people to report incidents

⁵ Name withheld, *Submission 16*, p. 1; Ka Chun Tse and David Tse, *Submission 20*, p. 2; Name withheld, *Submission 26*, p. 4; Matthew Roberts, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 41.

⁶ For example, see: Name withheld, *Submission 2*, p. 1; Name withheld, *Submission 21*, p. 1; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, pp. 18–19; Daniel Powell *Submission 37*, p. 4; Chad Hughes, Chief Executive Officer, Thorne Harbour Health, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4; Jenna Tuke, Chief Executive Officer, Switchboard Victoria, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9; Professor Adam Bourne, Director, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15; Cassandra Martin, Managing Lawyer, Q+Law, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26; Merrin Wake, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 44; Jeremy Oliver, Manager, LGBTIQA+ Communities Portfolio, Priority and Safer Communities Division, Victoria Police, public hearing, 25 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

⁷ For example, see: Name withheld, *Submission 2*, p. 1; Bi+ Pride Victoria, *Submission 73*, p. 12; Chad Hughes, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4; Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15; Cassandra Martin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 32.

⁸ Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9; Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16.

⁹ Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

¹¹ Assistant Commissioner Brett Curran, Partnerships and Safe Communities, Victoria Police, public hearing, Melbourne, 25 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

through trusted organisations, rather than directly to police.¹² Stakeholders argued that this would provide a more accessible and trusted reporting pathway.

Chad Hughes, Chief Executive Officer of Thorne Harbour Health, emphasised that community organisations are already responding to gaps in existing reporting pathways by supporting victims who do not feel comfortable reporting to police. He noted that Thorne Harbour Health ‘talk[s] to a lot of people who have stories, who really, even with a lot of encouragement, will never go forward to the police’.¹³ He argued, therefore, that there is a desperate need for ‘a system... to count the true number’¹⁴ of hate crimes, so that the full extent of the problem is better understood.

Heather Corkhill, Legal Director at Equality Australia, told the Committee that other communities affected by hate crimes, such as the Jewish community, use community-based reporting registers that allow people to report incidents to trusted organisations rather than directly to police.¹⁵ She said these models not only improve data on hate crime, but also connect victims with legal, social and psychological support to help them navigate the justice system.¹⁶ These established models provide a useful foundation for developing a reporting register for anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes.

These organisations already perform many of the core functions of a community reporting register, including providing a trusted avenue for reporting, connecting victims with support and contributing to a better understanding of the prevalence of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime.

FINDING 10: Some victim-survivors of anti-LGBTIQ+ crimes do not report their experiences to Victoria Police because they lack confidence that they will be believed, supported or receive an effective response.

RECOMMENDATION 8: That the Victorian Government support investment in trusted LGBTIQ+ community organisations to implement reporting mechanisms that are able to provide trauma-informed support to victim-survivors during a report or disclosure, including referrals to other appropriate supports.

2.2.2 Better identification

Identifying when a criminal offence is motivated by a predisposition towards a protected attribute is essential. If it is not identified, the offence may not be recorded as a hate crime, making it harder to understand patterns of offending, how common

¹² For example, see: Equality Australia, *Submission 31*, p. 5; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 19; RMIT School of Law, *Submission 42*, p. 4; Municipal Association of Victoria, *Submission 55*, p. 9; Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 70*, p. 17; Q+ Law, *Submission 71*, p. 4.

¹³ Chad Hughes, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Heather Corkhill, Legal Director, Equality Australia, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34.

¹⁶ Ibid.

these crimes are and to recognise the role prejudice played throughout the justice process.

The Committee heard that Victoria Police has taken several steps to strengthen its response to anti-LGBTIQA+ crimes, including improving the recording of prejudice motivations and establishing a dedicated LGBTIQA+ community portfolio in 2014.¹⁷ Witnesses acknowledged these efforts, with some noting that Victoria Police had done ‘excellent work’¹⁸ in identifying recent trends in hate crimes targeting gay and bisexual men.

However, the Committee also heard that more can be done. Stakeholders submitted that prejudice motivations are not always recognised, resulting in incidents being recorded under general offence categories rather than as a hate crime.¹⁹

Identity-based violence is often treated solely as family violence, with the underlying hate motivation overlooked. This is particularly applicable for identity-based violence within family—such as one family member harming another due to their identity—as well as intimate partner relationships.²⁰

Geoffrey Steer, an expert practitioner who established and led the New South Wales Police Force Hate Crime Unit, told the Committee that police currently rely on risk assessment tools designed for other types of offending, such as family violence, terrorism and general violence, rather than tools specifically developed for hate crime.²¹ He argued that this can result in anti-LGBTIQA+ crimes being misidentified, limiting the ability of police to identify patterns of offending and intervene before violence escalates.²²

To address this, Mr Steer proposed the development of a dedicated hate crime assessment framework that would help police identify the underlying drivers of hate crime, recognise emerging patterns and tailor interventions to the specific risks presented by each case.²³

The Committee heard that other jurisdictions use a series of hate crime indicators to assist investigators in recognising when an offence may have been motivated by prejudice.²⁴ Rather than acting as a checklist, these indicators prompt investigators to consider factors such as: the relationship between the victim and offender; the location

¹⁷ Assistant Commissioner Brett Curran, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23.

¹⁸ Joe Ball, Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities, public hearing, 25 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

¹⁹ Caleb Hawk, Deputy Director, Health Promotion and Community Engagement, Thorne Harbour Health, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10; Matthew Roberts, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 41.

²⁰ For example, see: Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 41*, p. 3; Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 70*, pp. 12–13; Adjunct Professor Nicole Asquith, School of Justice, Queensland University of Technology, public hearing, 25 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 21; Geoffrey Steer, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 71–72.

²¹ Geoffrey Steer, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 63–64.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 65.

of the incident; whether it occurred around a significant date; evidence of hate activity; previous incidents; and the level of violence involved.²⁵ Mr Steer contended that these indicators help investigators recognise potential hate crimes and ask the right questions during an investigation.²⁶

The need for practical, frontline assessment tools in Victoria was echoed by other stakeholders.²⁷ They argued that effective identification is critical not only in ensuring hate crimes are appropriately recorded, investigated and prosecuted, but also to ensure legislated protections operate as intended. Unless police are able to recognise when offending is motivated by prejudice, the hate-motivated nature of an offence may be overlooked and the protections provided by law may not be applied.

Some stakeholders suggested a range of other reforms to improve the identification and recording of hate crime, including:

- mandatory training for frontline police to better recognise different forms of hate crime
- improving Victoria Police's Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) recording system by introducing intrafamilial hate motivation as a recording category, supported by guidance for frontline officers
- introducing a mandatory secondary review of reports not initially identified as hate-motivated within 30 days, to improve the accuracy of hate crime recording and identify training or system gaps
- adopting nationally consistent definitions and recording standards for hate crimes.²⁸

FINDING 11: In some instances, hate crimes, including some occurring in family violence contexts, are not recognised or recorded as hate crimes.

RECOMMENDATION 9: That the Victorian Government work with Victoria Police to develop practical tools specifically for identifying anti-LGBTIQ+ crimes. This should support the consistent identification of prejudice, recording and response to hate-motivated offending. These tools should draw on best practice from other jurisdictions.

RECOMMENDATION 10: That Victoria Police update its recording system to include intrafamilial hate motivation, or similar, as a dedicated recording category. This should be supported by guidance to assist frontline officers in identifying and recording these offences.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Dr Justin Ellis and Professor Nicole Asquith, *Submission 64*, p. 6.

²⁸ Geoffrey Steer, *Submission 19*, p. 56.

RECOMMENDATION 11: That Victoria Police explore the feasibility of a mandatory secondary review of reports classified as ‘other’ to improve the accuracy of hate crime recording.

RECOMMENDATION 12: That the Victorian Government increase investment in LGBTIQA+ family violence prevention in acknowledgement of identity-based violence experienced by LGBTIQA+ people within family violence contexts.

RECOMMENDATION 13: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government for further development of the Australian Institute of Criminology’s National Hate Crime Database to better capture hate crimes against LGBTIQA+ communities.

2.2.3 Better responses

The Committee heard that Victoria Police has taken several steps in recent years to strengthen its responses to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes, including introducing mandatory LGBTIQA+ inclusive practice training across the organisation and expanding its network of LGBTIQA+ Liaison Officers (LLOs).

Stakeholders also acknowledged visible leadership from Victoria Police, describing its engagement with the LGBTIQA+ Ministerial Taskforce as ‘a really visible reflection of the leadership of the police wanting to make a strong and public statement around their support for LGBTIQA+ communities’.²⁹

At the same time, the Committee heard that the key challenge is not the absence of LGBTIQA+-inclusive laws or policies but ensuring they are consistently implemented in practice and that police are ‘properly trained’.³⁰

Training

Victoria Police told the Committee that LGBTIQA+ content is embedded throughout its recruit training at the police academy. This includes through

- classroom-based learning
- the Community Encounters Program, where recruits engage directly with LGBTIQA+ community members
- dedicated LGBTIQA+ scenarios within family violence training.³¹

²⁹ Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

³⁰ Matthew Roberts, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 41.

³¹ Jeremy Oliver, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

In addition to this foundational training, all Victoria Police employees are required to complete a new online LGBTIQ+-inclusive practice training module.³²

Stakeholders described the introduction of mandatory LGBTIQ+-inclusive practice training as ‘laudable’,³³ with Victoria Police advising that more than 80 per cent of officers had completed the training since it was introduced in January this year.³⁴

The Committee heard that, despite these training improvements, knowledge gaps in policing in practice appear to persist.³⁵ Stakeholders noted that the mandatory LGBTIQ+-inclusive practice e-learning module takes approximately 30 minutes to complete,³⁶ compared with around 200 hours of recruit training devoted to family and domestic violence.³⁷

Stakeholders argued that, in its current form, the training may not sufficiently build officers’ knowledge and skills to identify hate crime or recognise its unique characteristics.³⁸ They also called for the training to be independently evaluated to determine whether it equips officers to identify, investigate and respond effectively.³⁹

FINDING 12: The introduction of a mandatory LGBTIQ+-inclusive practice training module for all Victoria Police employees is a positive step towards strengthening its response to anti-LGBTIQ+ criminal behaviour.

RECOMMENDATION 14: That the Victorian Government commission an independent evaluation of Victoria Police’s LGBTIQ+ awareness training and the extent to which it equips officers to identify and charge hate-motivated offending.

Hate crimes unit

The establishment of a dedicated hate crimes unit was another proposal put forward to strengthen police responses. The Committee heard broad support for establishing a such a unit within Victoria Police.⁴⁰ Stakeholders argued that investigating hate crimes requires specialist expertise to identify prejudice motivations, preserve digital evidence, support victim-survivors and build prosecutable cases.

³² Ibid.

³³ Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

³⁴ Jeremy Oliver, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27.

³⁵ For example, see: Merrin Wake, *Submission 5*, p. 4; Matthew Roberts, *Submission 18*, p. 4; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 20.

³⁶ Jeremy Oliver, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

³⁷ Adjunct Professor Nicole Asquith, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 20.

⁴⁰ For example, see: Geoffrey Steer, *Submission 19*, p. 5; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 19; Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 21; Savanh Tanhchareun, Senior Adviser, International Policy, Equality Australia, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Heather Corkill, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28; Dr Sean Mulcahy, Policy Adviser, Victorian Pride Lobby, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 53.

Several pointed to dedicated hate crimes units in New South Wales and Western Australia as useful models,⁴¹ while others highlighted approaches in the United Kingdom and Ireland that combine specialist capability with improved reporting, data collection and community engagement.⁴²

However, Victoria Police advised that, following a recent organisational review, it did not support establishing a dedicated hate crimes unit.⁴³ Instead, it considered that a statewide policing model, supported by specialist areas and the ability to establish taskforces where required, was the most appropriate approach.⁴⁴

FINDING 13: Victoria Police does not currently support the establishment of a dedicated hate crimes unit, instead preferring a statewide policing model supported by specialist areas and taskforces where required.

LGBTIQ+ Liason Officers

Victoria Police LLOs provide a dedicated point of contact for LGBTIQ+ community members, offering non-judgemental advice, discreet support when reporting crime and information about available support services.⁴⁵ They also play an important role in building Victoria Police's understanding of the policing needs of LGBTIQ+ communities.⁴⁶ Victoria Police advised that it has more than 600 LLOs across the State.⁴⁷

The Committee heard that LLOs play an important role in building trust between Victoria Police and LGBTIQ+ communities and can improve the reporting and identification of hate crime.⁴⁸ Research by Dr Justin Ellis and Adjunct Professor Nicole Asquith found that only 22 per cent of LGBTIQ+ respondents who had contact with police in the previous 12 months trusted police, increasing to 31 per cent for those who had contact with LLOs.⁴⁹

Stakeholders argued that LLOs, through their understanding of the 'different ways in which hate can be experienced',⁵⁰ help police better recognise prejudice motivations, improve recording practices and identify broader patterns of offending.⁵¹

⁴¹ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 19; Heather Corkhill, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

⁴² Heather Corkhill, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35; Professor Adam Bourne, response to question on notice received 6 July 2026, pp. 2–3.

⁴³ Assistant Commissioner Brett Curran, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 32.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Victoria Police, *LGBTIQ+ Liaison Officers*, June 2026, <<https://www.police.vic.gov.au/LGBTIQ+liaison-officers>> accessed 27 June 2026.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Assistant Commissioner Brett Curran, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

⁴⁸ For example, see: Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 20; Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 21.

⁴⁹ Dr Justin Ellis and Professor Nicole Asquith, *Submission 64*, p. 14.

⁵⁰ Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 21.

⁵¹ Ibid.

The Committee heard:

While these crimes are happening across Australia, Victoria, New Zealand and the world, in terms of the numbers of arrests and raising awareness through the media and getting community safety messaging out, [Victoria Police] have been exemplary.⁵²

Stakeholders also identified opportunities to strengthen the program. This included:

- increasing the presence of LLOs, particularly in regional areas
- ensuring officers have the time and resources to build sustained community relationships
- improving consistency in the service provided.⁵³

While LLOs were viewed as playing a critical role in community trust, stakeholders also emphasised that they are not resourced to undertake complex investigations or develop system-wide intelligence.⁵⁴

FINDING 14: LGBTIQ+ Liaison Officers play an important role in supporting the building of trust between LGBTIQ+ communities and Victoria Police.

FINDING 15: Victoria Police advised that it has more than 600 LGBTIQ+ Liaison Officers across the State.

Oversight and scrutiny panel

The Committee heard concerns that existing police accountability mechanisms may not provide sufficient independent oversight of police responses to hate crime.⁵⁵

Matthew Roberts' experience highlighted the importance of robust and independent oversight when police responses fall short of expected standards.⁵⁶ After reporting an assault on a train, he told the Committee that officers failed to obtain crucial CCTV footage before it was permanently deleted, meaning 'the offender was never identified, charged or prosecuted'.⁵⁷ He also said he was not offered victim support services.⁵⁸

⁵² Joe Ball, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 37.

⁵³ Jarryd Bartle, *Submission 1*, p. 5; Matthew Roberts, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 45; Merrin Wake, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 45; Jan Farrell, Co-Lead, Rainbow Local Government, Victorian Pride Lobby, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 53.

⁵⁴ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 20.

⁵⁵ Ibid; Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health, and Society, *Submission 69*, pp. 29–31; Matthew Roberts, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 41.

⁵⁶ Matthew Roberts, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 41.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Following his complaint, Victoria Police's Professional Standards Command found that police had 'failed to investigate and failed to support the victim'.⁵⁹

More broadly, some stakeholders questioned whether the current system of 'police investigating police'⁶⁰ provides adequate accountability. Your Community Health warned that these practices can create a 'real or perceived conflicts of interest'⁶¹ that may further erode trust in policing among LGBTIQA+ community.

To strengthen independent oversight, stakeholders recommended establishing a 'Scrutiny Panel' or similar body, drawing on existing models in the United Kingdom and those being developed by the Queensland Police Service. The Committee heard that such panels could strengthen accountability, build trust with affected communities, improve reporting and identify systemic issues in police responses.⁶² Stakeholders also called for more accessible and transparent complaints processes and stronger IBAC oversight of police misconduct.⁶³

FINDING 16: Independent oversight mechanisms, such as a 'Scrutiny Panel' or similar body, could strengthen accountability, improve police practice and increase community confidence in police responses to hate crimes.

RECOMMENDATION 15: That the Victorian Government consider the feasibility of establishing a 'Scrutiny Panel' or similar body and report publicly on its findings.

2.3 Justice system responses

The Committee heard that an effective response to hate crimes requires not only a strong policing response but also a justice system that delivers meaningful outcomes for victim-survivors.

David Brown praised the police response to his assault, stating, 'I cannot fault the police in the way they handled my case',⁶⁴ but said the outcome ultimately 'did not lead to justice'.⁶⁵ Despite the seriousness of the offending, which involved luring him through a dating app before carrying out a violent assault, one offender received no conviction and another was not charged.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Your Community Health, *Submission 38*, p. 12.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 20; Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health, and Society, *Submission 69*, pp. 29–31.

⁶³ Inner Melbourne Community Legal, *Submission 77*, p. 4.

⁶⁴ David Brown, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Other stakeholders raised similar concerns, pointing to outcomes they considered disproportionately lenient, including ‘a \$100 fine for a machete attack’⁶⁷ and ‘nine months’ probation for a near-fatal beating’.⁶⁸ The Committee heard that these outcomes can undermine confidence that anti-LGBTIQA+ criminal behaviour is treated with the seriousness it deserves.

2.3.1 Assistance to navigate the justice system

An effective justice system is not just about having support services available—it is also about making sure victim-survivors can find, access and use them. The Committee heard that they often have to deal with police, courts, hospitals, counsellors, financial assistance schemes and other services at the same time, while recovering from trauma.⁶⁹ David Brown told the Committee:

When you are in pain and you are on prescription painkillers, you are not in a good place to start with. And then it is, ‘There are great supports out there – go find them.’ I had a community worker working with me. I had lots of good people working with me, but no-one can help you in a broad sense. They are always: ‘This is my little box, I have to stay here’; ‘This is my little box, I’m over there. You ring them’; and ‘No, we haven’t got an intake – you’ve got to ring them.’ That is why I have got so many hundreds of points of contact. I needed help, and it was hard to find. When I found it, it was great. But connecting people with that help is hard.⁷⁰

The Committee also heard that many people do not know what support is available or what rights they have, with some not being told about entitlements such as financial assistance.⁷¹ Stakeholders warned that navigating so many different services can be overwhelming and may cause some them to disengage from the justice system altogether.⁷²

To address this, the Committee heard support for a specialist Justice Navigator to provide a single, trusted point of contact to help victims understand their rights, access support and navigate the justice system.⁷³ Stakeholders considered that Sexual Assault Services Victoria’s Justice Navigator Pilot provides a useful model as a basis for further exploration.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 26.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Cassandra Martin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26; Sebastian Sharp, Senior Lead, Policy and Community Legal Education, Q+Law, Fitzroy Legal Service, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; David Brown, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

⁷⁰ David Brown, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

⁷¹ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 24.

⁷² Cassandra Martin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

⁷³ For example, see: Inner Melbourne Community Legal, *Submission 77*, p. 4; Sebastian Sharp, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27.

⁷⁴ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 24.

FINDING 17: Victim-survivors often face significant barriers navigating the justice and support systems, which can limit access to support and discourage continued engagement with the justice process.

RECOMMENDATION 16: That the Victorian Government establish a pilot Justice Navigator program to provide victim-survivors with a single, trusted point of contact to help them understand their rights, access support services and navigate the justice system, with outcomes publicly reported.

2.3.2 Introduction of aggravated offences

The Committee heard that when a prejudice-motivated assault is recorded simply as a common assault, ‘the motive disappears, the data disappears’.⁷⁵ This leaves people feeling that ‘the central fact of what happened to them has been ignored’⁷⁶ by the justice system.

In response, stakeholders called for the introduction of aggravated hate-based offences. They argued that where an offence is motivated by hostility towards a person’s protected attribute, it should be explicitly recognised in law and elevated to an aggravated offence.⁷⁷ Stakeholders emphasised that this approach not only acknowledges that prejudice was central to the offence but also improves hate crime data collection and enables more targeted responses for offenders.

An important consideration is how the ‘hate’ or ‘prejudice’ based aspect of an aggravated offence would be established in practice. Stakeholders acknowledged that it can be difficult to determine why an offender committed an offence or ‘what is going on inside someone’s head’.⁷⁸

Some stakeholders proposed that the hate or prejudice element could be established through evidence that the offender demonstrated or expressed hostility through their words or actions, rather than requiring proof of their underlying motivation.⁷⁹

Stakeholders pointed to successful prosecutions in other jurisdictions as evidence that a demonstration element can be an effective way of establishing the hate or prejudice element of an offence. The Committee also heard that Queensland’s *Criminal Code* (s 52B), together with recent reforms in Tasmania and New South Wales, provide useful Australian precedents for this approach.

⁷⁵ Chad Hughes, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 8; Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15; Dr Sean Mulcahy, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 53.

⁷⁸ Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16.

⁷⁹ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 16; Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16; Heather Corkhill, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30; Thorne Harbour Health, response to questions on notice received 7 July 2026, pp. 2–3.

Stakeholders also distinguished aggravated offences from aggravated sentencing, which already exists in Victoria. Under the current approach, a court may treat the hate element of an offence as an aggravating factor at sentencing, which can result in a more severe sentence. By contrast, an aggravated offence would be recognised and charged from the outset, in addition to the underlying offence. Stakeholders argued that this early recognition is ‘incredibly meaningful’⁸⁰ for victims because it acknowledges that prejudice was central to what happened to them.

Further, a prejudiced motivation identified at sentencing is not automatically recorded on an offender’s criminal record, meaning that future courts may not know about previous hate-motivated offending. Stakeholders also noted that aggravated offences build on existing offences that police are already familiar with and do not criminalise additional speech, as the underlying conduct would already constitute a criminal offence.

RECOMMENDATION 17: That the Victorian Government explore the feasibility of amending the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) to introduce aggravated hate-based offences.

2.3.3 Victoria’s ‘post and boast’ laws

Victoria’s ‘post and boast’ laws were implemented by the Government in 2025, in response to an increasing trend of perpetrators sharing content depicting offences.

The Committee heard that Victoria’s post and boast laws can apply to some crimes but only in limited circumstances. Stakeholders highlighted that the laws do not cover many of the offences commonly committed, including serious assaults and some sexual offences.⁸¹ Further, stakeholders emphasised that the purpose of the post and boast laws is to criminalise the act of filming and sharing the conduct of the crime online.⁸²

While stakeholders supported the post and boast laws as a positive measure, they argued that they should complement, rather than replace, aggravated hate-based offences. It is argued that this would:

- better recognise hate-motivated offending
- improve data collection
- support more appropriate responses.⁸³

⁸⁰ Heather Corkhill, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 34; Thorne Harbour Health, response to questions on notice received 7 July 2026, p. 2.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

FINDING 18: Victoria's 'post and boast' laws address the filming and sharing of offending, rather than the prejudice motivating the crimes. There is not yet sufficient evidence to demonstrate the impact existing post and boast laws have had on reducing anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes.

RECOMMENDATION 18: That the Victorian Government consider amending the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) to ensure that the publication of aggravated hate-based offences is covered by 'post and boast' laws.

2.3.4 Restorative justice options for victim-survivors

The Committee heard support for exploring restorative justice as an additional, voluntary pathway for victim-survivors. While restorative justice can also contribute to offender accountability and rehabilitation, stakeholders emphasised its potential to improve outcomes for victims.⁸⁴

Restorative justice does not seek to replace the role of the criminal justice system. Rather, it aims to provide an alternative for outcomes beyond prosecution, such as 'being heard',⁸⁵ having the harm recognised or preventing further offending.⁸⁶

The Committee heard that restorative justice is already being used internationally as a complementary justice response.⁸⁷ In the United Kingdom, the *Why me?* restorative justice program has developed specialist guidance, while the *Let's Go By Talking* project examined restorative justice models across several European countries.⁸⁸

The Committee heard that these programs are voluntary, survivor-led and trauma-informed. They complement the criminal justice system and require close collaboration between LGBTIQA+ organisations, restorative justice practitioners and criminal justice agencies.⁸⁹ The Committee also heard that the Centre for Innovative Justice at RMIT is developing a restorative justice approach specifically for LGBTIQA+ communities.⁹⁰

Stakeholders recommended funding a pilot program, co-designed with LGBTIQA+ communities and informed by existing expertise in Victoria and international models.⁹¹

⁸⁴ RMIT School of Law, *Submission 42*, p. 4; Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 19; Sebastian Sharp, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Cassandra Martin, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 31–34; Adjunct Professor Nicole Asquith, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

⁸⁵ Q+ Law, *Submission 71*, p. 17.

⁸⁶ RMIT School of Law, *Submission 42*, p. 4; Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 19; Sebastian Sharp, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Cassandra Martin, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 31–34; Adjunct Professor Nicole Asquith, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

⁸⁷ Q+ Law, response to question on notice received 7 July 2026, pp. 1–2.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Professor Adam Bourne, response to question on notice received 6 July 2026, p. 1.

⁹¹ Sebastian Sharp, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Cassandra Martin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31.

A pilot program would assess whether restorative justice can provide a safe and effective complementary response to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crime and identify the most appropriate model for implementation.

See also Section 3.3.2 for a discussion on diversionary programs.

FINDING 19: Some victim-survivors seek forms of justice beyond prosecution. Restorative justice may provide a safe, trauma-informed and complementary pathway to meet those needs.

RECOMMENDATION 19: That the Victorian Government consider establishing a pilot restorative justice program, co-designed with LGBTIQ+ communities.

RECOMMENDATION 20: That the Victorian Government consider establishing a Board of Inquiry into historical violence, discrimination and stigma against LGBTIQ+ communities in Victoria, and consider an appropriate redress pathway and reform to the historical homosexual convictions scheme.

2.4 More supports for victim-survivors

Community organisations play a critical role in supporting victim-survivors and are often the first point of contact for those who do not trust, or are reluctant to engage with, formal systems.

Switchboard told the Committee that it operates ‘at the front line of harm’,⁹² supporting people experiencing abuse, discrimination and violence through services such as the Rainbow Door helpline. In August 2025, the Victorian Government announced an expansion of Switchboard’s service, in direct response to an increased wave of app-based attacks.⁹³

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission also administers a community reporting tool on its website. Thorne Harbour Health explained that ‘when people do not trust the system, they come to us’,⁹⁴ adding that community organisations often perform this role with limited resources.

Stakeholders emphasised that community-controlled organisations are vital lifelines for victims of hate crimes, combining trusted relationships with a deep understanding of community needs.⁹⁵ David Brown told the Committee that ‘support is really the

⁹² Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2.

⁹³ Premier of Victoria, *Standing Against Hate with LGBTIQ+ Victorians*, media release, 24 August 2025.

⁹⁴ Chad Hughes, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

⁹⁵ For example, see: David Brown, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40.

bigger part of [his] story’, stating that he did ‘not know where [he] would be without it or if [he] would be [here] at all’.⁹⁶

The Committee heard a strong case for greater investment in specialist LGBTIQA+ community services.⁹⁷ These organisations are already delivering critical support to victims, often with limited resources. Limited resources not only place a strain on these organisations but can also mean people in urgent need of support go without, compounding their trauma and increasing the risk of serious psychological harm.

FINDING 20: Trusted LGBTIQA+ community organisations are fundamental to supporting victim-survivors and are uniquely placed to deliver safe support and connect people with formal services.

RECOMMENDATION 21: That the Victorian Government review funding to community organisations to ensure they are adequately and securely resourced to meet growing demand.

RECOMMENDATION 22: That the Victorian Government invest in partnership building and practice leadership between LGBTIQA+ organisations and family violence, employment, housing and alcohol and other drug services, to increase referral pathways, sector integration and the capacity of the social supports sector to provide care to LGBTIQA+ people.

Financial assistance

The Committee heard that some victim-survivors also require financial assistance to help them recover.⁹⁸ David Brown highlighted that, in his experience, recovery involved navigating a complex and fragmented support system, requiring:

- 720 hours of missed work
- 241 hours of appointments
- 230 interactions with different services, with many services either lacking capacity or directing him elsewhere.⁹⁹

Stakeholders argued that Victoria’s Financial Assistance Scheme can create barriers for LGBTIQA+ victims,¹⁰⁰ with Thorne Harbour Health submitting that the requirement

⁹⁶ David Brown, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40.

⁹⁷ Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2; Chad Hughes, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Maya Ellazam, Senior Lead, Policy, Advocacy and Communications, Switchboard Victoria, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12; Daniel Powell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 42.

⁹⁸ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 22; David Brown, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40.

⁹⁹ David Brown, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40.

¹⁰⁰ South-East Monash Legal Service, *Submission 79*, p. 31.

to report a crime to police before accessing financial assistance ‘functions as a barrier to support rather than a safeguard’.¹⁰¹ Stakeholders advocated for this requirement to be removed so that people can access financial assistance if they report the incident to a trusted community organisation or medical professional.¹⁰² The Committee also heard that many people are unaware of the support available to them, resulting in them missing out on assistance they may be entitled to receive.¹⁰³

An independent review of Victoria’s Financial Assistance Scheme is currently underway to assess whether the scheme is operating as intended and to recommend improvements to its efficiency, timeliness and user experience.¹⁰⁴ The review is due to be completed by November 2026, with its findings to be tabled in the Victorian Parliament.¹⁰⁵

FINDING 21: Timely financial support is essential to assist the recovery for victim-survivors of crime, including hate crimes. Some stakeholders spoke about barriers within the current Financial Assistance Scheme that may prevent some victim-survivors from accessing the support they need.

RECOMMENDATION 23: That the Victorian Government increase funding for community legal centres to provide legal support for victim-survivors of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, including support to access the Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme.

RECOMMENDATION 24: That the Victorian Government, in considering the recommendations of the Independent Review of the Victims of Crime Financial Assistance Scheme, consider reform to the *Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance Scheme) Act 2022* to allow victim-survivors to make reports to trusted medical professionals or support services instead of requiring reports to police.

2.5 Increasing potential terror threat to LGBTIQ+ people

The Committee heard from a range of stakeholders regarding risks to LGBTIQ+ people of a significant terror event in the foreseeable future. Dr Josh Roose stated in relation to global terror attacks against LGBTIQ+ community in the past decade:

These venues and people are increasingly visible targets within the extremist imagination. The point that I want to make here is that we should not wait for a mass casualty attack before we take this seriously. The pathway to terrorist targeting is

¹⁰¹ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 22.

¹⁰² Equality Australia, *Submission 31*, p. 6; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 22; Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, *Submission 69*, pp. 22–23; Q+Law, *Submission 71*, p. 19.

¹⁰³ Joe Ball, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁴ Elizabeth Langdon, Victims of Crime Commissioner, public hearing, 25 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁵ Victims of Crime Commissioner, *Reports and reviews*, February 2026 <<https://www.victimsofcrime.vic.gov.au/reports-and-reviews>> accessed 27 July 2026.

often preceded by other forms of conduct - dehumanising rhetoric, online glorification, surveillance of venues, threats, harassment, assault, filming and posting and boasting.¹⁰⁶

Similarly, Joe Ball, Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ communities, told the Committee:

We are seeing a rise in anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment globally. I actually really want to say this on the record, and it is not something I planned to say except for hearing the submissions over the last day: it is not inconceivable – and this could happen here – that we could have a significant event against LGBTIQA+ communities. There could be a terrorist attack against our communities.¹⁰⁷

The Committee notes that one month after the public hearings of this Inquiry were held and the above statement given by the Commissioner, a suspected terror attack was perpetrated against LGBTIQA+ people at a Berlin Pride event, killing one person and injuring 29 others.

FINDING 22: Experts told the Committee of concern for an increased terror threat against LGBTIQA+ communities in Australia.

RECOMMENDATION 25: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government to ensure that national anti-terror preparedness settings consider threats against LGBTIQA+ communities.

¹⁰⁶ Dr Josh Roose, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 64.

¹⁰⁷ Joe Ball, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

Chapter 3

Preventing anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes

3.1 Overview

This Chapter outlines measures stakeholders identified as having the potential to help prevent anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes. The Committee heard support for a whole-of-government approach to prevention that is necessary to combat a sentiment pervasive throughout society.

Dr Geoffrey Steer's submission states:

Current Australian prevention initiatives are concentrated at the legislative and policing-capability end of the spectrum. Victim-facing, offender-facing, and community-capacity initiatives are effectively absent.¹

This Chapter also outlines a range of specific reforms that stakeholders considered could further strengthen prevention efforts, including:

- education initiatives to counter stereotypes and depictions of the LGBTIQA+ community
- improvements to online platforms safety and moderation, including social media and dating apps
- potential legislative reforms.

3.2 A Victorian hate crimes prevention strategy

The Committee heard that prioritising and making clear Victoria's commitment to equality is central to combatting the growth in hate crimes. Jenna Tuke, Chief Executive Officer at Switchboard Victoria, noted this significance at a public hearing:

Leadership matters here. When leaders and institutions look away, are silent or fail to offer alternative messaging to the hate speech that is pervading our screens and airways, that emboldens those who seek to harm and divide us. We need our political, social, and cultural leaders to demonstrate clear and unequivocal commitment to LGBTIQI+ rights, safety and inclusion across all levels of society.²

¹ Dr Geoffrey Steer, *Submission 19*, p. 3.

² Jenna Tuke, Chief Executive Officer, Switchboard Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

Joe Ball, the Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities, told the Committee that the Victorian Government has made significant progress in introducing a central policy function for addressing LGBTIQA+ equality.³ Commissioner Ball noted that Victoria having an equality portfolio with a Minister for Equality, and being the only State in Australia to have a Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities, was evidence that Victoria was currently ‘lead[ing] the way’ in addressing anti-LGBTIQA+ hate.⁴

In April 2026, the Victorian Government established a Ministerial portfolio for Men and Boys. The Committee heard evidence that the portfolio should include the responsibility to provide leadership in combatting harmful stereotypes.⁵ At the time of the Committee’s public hearings, the Minister for Men and Boys had not yet met with LGBTIQA+ support and advocacy groups such as Thorne Harbour Health and Switchboard Victoria.⁶ The Committee notes that the Ministerial portfolio for Men and Boys was discontinued on 4 August 2026.⁷

Heather Corkhill from Equality Australia noted in a public hearing that there has been successful work done to combat hate crimes in ‘pockets’, including by Victoria Police, victim-survivor support services and community legal centres.⁸ However, the effectiveness of these responses has ultimately been limited by a lack of coordination between agencies and their goals.⁹ Thorne Harbour Health told the Committee that, throughout the response to the dating app-facilitated attacks, they ‘experienced a sustained absence of coordinated government response’.¹⁰

Dr Sean Mulcahy from the Victorian Pride Lobby told the Committee that the most ‘effective’ way to combat hate crimes was to develop a whole-of-government hate crimes prevention plan.¹¹ Professor Adam Bourne agreed, arguing it could be included in the existing LGBTIQA+ equality strategy, *Pride in Our Future*.¹²

Dr Mulcahy noted that this was a central recommendation of a 2006 report undertaken by the Joint Working Group of the Attorney-General’s and Health Minister’s Advisory Committees on GLBTI Issues, *With Respect: A Strategy for Reducing Homophobic Harassment in Victoria*, which was not accepted by the Victorian Government.¹³

3 Joe Ball, Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities, public hearing, Melbourne, 25 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

4 Ibid.

5 Our Watch, *Submission 44*, pp. 5, 10.

6 Chad Hughes, Chief Executive Officer, Thorne Harbour Health, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11.

7 Premier of Victoria, *Statement from the Premier*, August 2026 <<https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/statement-premier-173>> accessed 4 August 2026.

8 Heather Corkhill, Legal Director, Equality Australia, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

9 Ibid.

10 Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 25.

11 Dr Sean Mulcahy, Policy Adviser, Victorian Pride Lobby, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 58.

12 Professor Adam Bourne, Director, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

13 Dr Sean Mulcahy, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 53.

Evidence also pointed towards the need for a whole-of-society response to condemn hate crimes. Geoffrey Steer, former head of the New South Wales Police Force Hate Crimes Unit, told the Committee that key to combatting these crimes was a strong voice denouncing the permissibility of hate crimes, as perpetrators:

... use their grievances to target a group that they think is vulnerable. If all communities came out, both religious and civil, and said this behaviour is not accepted, you will find that that behaviour will slowly change because society is setting the benchmark.¹⁴

Dr Josh Roose, a political sociologist at Deakin University, noted that leaders should denounce dehumanising and extremist language, ostracism, and violence towards the LGBTIQ+ community. Dr Roose told the Committee that this leadership must be shown by political, community and religious leaders alike.¹⁵

FINDING 23: Some responses to anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes have been effective, including by areas of Victoria Police, victim-survivor support groups and community legal centres. This effectiveness could be improved by greater central coordination between disparate bodies.

RECOMMENDATION 26: That the Victorian Government consider developing a whole-of-government hate crimes prevention strategy, as part of the broader crime prevention strategy. This should be developed in partnership with the LGBTIQ+ community.

3.3 Education initiatives

The Committee heard that public education initiatives are important in preventing the growth of hate crimes in Victoria.¹⁶ This includes public information and education campaigns, including:

- promoting an accurate and respectful understanding of LGBTIQ+ people and communities¹⁷
- promoting public knowledge of what a hate crime is, its impacts and how it can be reported.¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Dr Josh Roose, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 72.

¹⁶ Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

¹⁷ Name Withheld, *Submission 16*, p. 3; RMIT Digital Ethnography Research Centre and Social Equity Research Centre, *Submission 40*, p. 2.

¹⁸ Adjunct Professor Nicole Asquith, School of Justice, Queensland University of Technology, public hearing, 25 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17.

The Committee heard evidence that education initiatives need to be developed in a considered way. Evidence noted that poorly designed and conceived education campaigns can ‘risk’ creating further division and backlash towards the LGBTIQ+ community.¹⁹ Jenna Tuke told the Committee that hate crime prevention campaigns need to be developed ‘alongside and with our communities’.²⁰

3.3.1 Education initiatives in schools

Evidence consistently noted the importance of educating young people. Helen Bolton, Chief Executive Officer at Respect Victoria told the Committee that early prevention counters harmful attitudes and social norms ‘before they start’ and before they turn into violent crimes.²¹

The Committee was also reminded that the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence considered primary prevention as centrally important to addressing the underlying drivers of violence.²²

Current Victorian Government school programs designed to prevent underlying drivers of gender-based violence and create safe environments for LGBTIQ+ Victorians include:

- Respectful Relationships, a program designed to ‘teach children how to build healthy relationships, resilience and confidence’.²³
- The Safe Schools program, which provides professional development to school staff to equip schools to foster safe environments for LGBTIQ+ students.²⁴

The Committee heard mixed evidence as to the effectiveness of these programs. Professor Adam Bourne told the Committee that they provide important ‘building blocks’ in preventing anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiment and that, overall, ‘Victoria has a program of inclusive education that it should feel very proud of’.²⁵

However, the Committee also heard that these programs are inconsistently delivered, with access ‘uneven across schools, regions and settings’, and ‘not consistently reaching those most at risk’.²⁶

Some stakeholders did not support the implementation of preventative education programs in schools. In its submission, the Australian Christian Lobby stated its belief

¹⁹ LGB Alliance, *Submission 39*, p. 11.

²⁰ Jenna Tuke, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

²¹ Helen Bolton, Chief Executive Officer, Respect Victoria, public hearing, 25 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 55.

²² Mischa Barr, Lead, Policy and Advocacy, Jesuit Social Services, public hearing, 25 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 47.

²³ Victorian Government, *Respectful relationships*, July 2026 <<https://www.vic.gov.au/respectful-relationships>> accessed 27 July 2026.

²⁴ Victorian Government, *Safe schools*, March 2026 <<https://www.vic.gov.au/safe-schools>> accessed 27 July 2026.

²⁵ Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18.

²⁶ LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, *Submission 53*, p. 2; Merrin Wake, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

that school-based LGBTIQ+ inclusion strategies have the ‘unintended effect of causing greater community division’.²⁷ The Lesbian Action Group argued that, while ‘respectful relationships need to be taught from kindergarten age ... programs aimed at promoting LGBTIQ+ inclusivity ... have no place in the school system’.²⁸

Professor Bourne told the Committee that these programs should ‘go a step further in tackling prejudice face on’, by providing training for teachers to have conversations among students.²⁹ Heather Corkhill recommended that the Victorian Government provide resourcing to properly evaluate the success of individual education programs in preventing anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiment and further fund the expansion of programs deemed to be effective.³⁰

Adjunct Professor Nicole Asquith, from the School of Justice at Queensland University of Technology, argued that school-aged prevention initiatives are only one tool to counter hate crimes and need to be partnered with wider public education initiatives:

I think we are doing a lot of work in schools at the moment, and we put all of our eggs in that basket, that schools are going to do everything... But I think we need to remember that those kids go home to families that may hold really hateful ideas and behaviours, and communities and sporting clubs. So that is why I am talking about us needing a general public awareness campaign in the same way that we are always needing those sorts of campaigns around family, sexual and domestic violence.³¹

FINDING 24: School education initiatives are important tools which can facilitate conversations and improve equality outcomes for the LGBTIQ+ community.

RECOMMENDATION 27: That the Victorian Government expand inclusion and respectful relationships education in schools to ensure they are effectively representing LGBTIQ+ identities and providing alternatives to harmful gender norms.

3.3.2 Diversionary programs for at risk youth

As noted in Chapter 1, many perpetrators of hate crimes are young people, with some offenders as young as 13, broadly falling into the category of ‘thrillseeker’ (see Section 1.3.2).³² Evidence to the Inquiry noted that current responses to hate crimes, primarily the incarceration of young men, can be ineffective at preventing them from reoffending.³³

²⁷ Australian Christian Lobby, *Submission 49*, p. 4.

²⁸ Lesbian Action Group, *Submission 7*, p. 17.

²⁹ Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18.

³⁰ Heather Corkhill, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 32.

³¹ Adjunct Professor Nicole Asquith, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 21.

³² Daniel Powell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 42.

³³ Geoffrey Steer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 67.

Geoffrey Steer noted that, as ‘thrillseekers’ do not commit hate crimes from a strong ideological base, sending young people to jail often ‘makes the problem worse’ through exposure to ‘organised hate group ideologies’ in prison.³⁴

Similarly, Mischa Barr from Jesuit Social Services told the Committee that ‘prison is not a rehabilitative environment’ for addressing the harmful attitudes that drive hate and hate crimes.³⁵

Stakeholders consistently supported diversionary programs for young people, to help them engage in more positive behaviours. These include intervention programs for young people who have committed hate crimes, as well as diversion programs for those exhibiting potentially harmful behaviour ‘before it escalates into violence’.³⁶

Dr Josh Roose noted that these programs must not ‘demonis[e] young men’. Dr Roose told the Committee that policing belief and ‘telling them they are wrong’ would risk casting young men as criminals, potentially radicalising young men into a more hateful, ‘deeper ecosystem’.³⁷

The Committee heard that such programs should focus on the ‘reintegration and rehabilitation’ of young people who have committed crimes.³⁸ Dr Roose noted that preventative programs should include digital literacy and critical thinking programs, with the aim to engage young men, focusing on ‘hope’.³⁹ He told the Committee:

I think first and foremost we have to engage young men as people – as young people – and offer them basically a chance to discuss their views, engage with them, but also provide them meaningful ways forward.⁴⁰

Mr Steer added that diversion programs must address underlying issues which can lead to the development of anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment:

Examples have been doing the hard work with the individual to work out what their bias is and why they have got it, and to divert that to the call for it. When you sit down with a lot of hate crime offenders and you talk to them, the ideology or the belief system is just a justification for their behaviour. There is trauma in their life, whether that is substance abuse, child abuse, domestic violence history, low self-esteem or whatever is the driving factor. So a lot of diversion programs have tried to address those core issues to change – instead of blaming others for the problems in your life, to actually work on addressing what is driving that behaviour.⁴¹

See also Section 2.3.4 for a discussion on restorative justice programs.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Mischa Barr, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 53.

³⁶ Dr Sean Mulachy, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 58.

³⁷ Dr Josh Roose, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 70–71.

³⁸ Mischa Barr, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 53.

³⁹ Dr Josh Roose, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 70–71.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Geoffrey Steer, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 69–70.

FINDING 25: Traditional responses to hate crimes, including incarceration, can be ineffective at preventing or deterring hate crimes. As well, these responses can further radicalise young men.

RECOMMENDATION 28: That the Victorian Government develop and implement hate crime diversion and deradicalisation programs, including within the Violence Reduction Unit, with a particular focus on young men. These programs should focus upon rehabilitation and the reintegration of offenders into society.

RECOMMENDATION 29: That the Victorian Government support community-led social campaigns that address the drivers of anti-LGBTIQA+ violence, developed in partnership with relevant expertise from LGBTIQA+ violence prevention, gender equity, men's health and youth organisations.

3

3.3.3 Digital media literacy education programs

As noted in Section 1.2.3, a new wave of hate crimes has been facilitated via online technology platforms, including dating apps and social media. In particular, social media algorithms and violent online communities have helped to encourage and disseminate anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment into the wider community.

The Committee heard that these online communities are often built on inaccurate stereotypes about the LGBTIQA+ community.⁴² Dr Roose told the Committee that in some online spaces, the LGBTIQA+ community, particularly trans and gender-diverse people, are often depicted as symbols of wider societal decay.⁴³

Evidence noted that hate crimes can be cultivated in multiple forms, including homophobic, transphobic and misogynistic online content.⁴⁴ Respect Victoria told the Committee that harmful online content can act to 'dehumanise and vilify' the LGBTIQA+ community and promote anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment.⁴⁵ In online environments, these representations make the LGBTIQA+ community 'legitimate targets for intimidation, humiliation and violence'.⁴⁶

The Committee heard that digital media literacy education was essential to 'mitigating radicalisation and absorption of misinformation' that feeds anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment

⁴² Kath Brackett, Director, Community and Sector Development, Municipal Association of Victoria, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 54.

⁴³ Dr Josh Roose, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 64.

⁴⁴ Kath Brackett, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 54.

⁴⁵ Respect Victoria, *Submission 81*, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Dr Josh Roose, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 64.

online.⁴⁷ In particular, evidence noted that these programs should be targeted at young people, who have ‘grown up’ using the internet and social media platforms.⁴⁸

This education should teach young people to understand how social media algorithms and online communities can shape beliefs.⁴⁹ The Committee heard that media literacy would provide the tools to ‘empower’ young people to question the content they are viewing and understand how to access reliable and accurate information in its place.⁵⁰

FINDING 26: Harmful online content has been utilised to perpetuate violence against LGBTIQ+ communities.

RECOMMENDATION 30: That the Victorian Government expand media literacy education in schools to support the identification of dis- and misinformation.

3.4 Improvements to platform safety and moderation

3.4.1 Moderate online content more effectively

Social media algorithms can amplify anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiment by promoting increasingly violent content to users.⁵¹ Some stakeholders argued that digital platforms ‘are not passive conduits’⁵² of content but actively shape what people see.⁵³ They do this through recommendation systems that prioritise engagement and by creating feedback loops.

Stakeholders also told the Committee that it is ‘almost impossible’⁵⁴ to use some social media platforms without being ‘immediately inundated by hatred’.⁵⁵ Laura Vines, Manager of Prevention Policy and Influence, Respect Victoria, noted that it can take as little as two minutes for a new account to be shown hateful content:

People have set up dummy social media accounts where there is very little information given aside from the gender of the person. If it is a boy or a man, the pace with which this

⁴⁷ Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 70*, p. 22.

⁴⁸ Geoffrey Steer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 73.

⁴⁹ Name Withheld, *Submission 14*, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Geoffrey Steer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 73.

⁵¹ Name withheld, *Submission 14*, p. 1; VMIAC, *Submission 47*, p. 6; Sophie Pilbeam, *Submission 27*, p. 1; Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 46*, p. 15; Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 66*, p. 2; Heather Corkhill, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29; Mischa Barr, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 47.

⁵² Geoffrey Steer, *Submission 19*, p. 4.

⁵³ LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, *Submission 53*, p. 4; Your Community Health, *Submission 47*, p. 6; Dr Josh Roose, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 66; Laura Vines, Manager, Prevention Policy and Influence, Respect Victoria, public hearing, 25 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 59–60.

⁵⁴ Dr Josh Roose, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 66.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 66.

manosphere content is served to them, regardless of their interactions and preferences, is incredibly quick. I think in some of the studies it can be as quick as two minutes.⁵⁶

The Committee heard that social media platforms need to take greater responsibility in preventing anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiment.⁵⁷ Stakeholders argued that there is not enough oversight of how platforms identify, moderate and remove hateful content, describing this as ‘a significant problem’.⁵⁸ They called for social media companies to be held accountable for moderating harmful content, particularly where online behaviour involves threats, harassment, doxxing (exposing personal details without consent), targeted intimidation or the luring of victims.⁵⁹

The Committee notes that the Australian eSafety Commissioner’s recent Federal Court proceedings against Telegram illustrate the challenges of relying on platforms to manage harmful content. The proceedings allege that Telegram failed to remove reported terrorist material and comply with its obligations under the *Online Safety Act 2021*, highlighting the need for regulatory oversight where platforms do not meet expected safety standards.

Some stakeholders expressed concern that stronger moderation of online content could restrict ‘legitimate religious expression’⁶⁰ or prevent ‘citizens who engage in controversial political debates’⁶¹ from exercising their right to free speech. In response, those supporting stronger moderation emphasised that they were not seeking to restrict ‘disagreements about opinions’⁶² but rather moderate ‘actions and words [that] are inciting violence’.⁶³

Stakeholders acknowledged that while people can ‘hold extreme views in society’,⁶⁴ they ‘do not have the right to cross over from [their] belief system and to cause harm to another person’. In their view, moderation should focus on preventing violence and harm and that this can be done without limiting legitimate expression.

FINDING 27: Digital platforms are not passive hosts of content but actively shape what users see in ways that could amplify anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiment.

FINDING 28: Stakeholders argued that social media platforms should take greater responsibility in helping to reduce the harmful targeting of the LGBTIQ+ community on their platforms.

⁵⁶ Laura Vines, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 59–60.

⁵⁷ Name withheld, *Submission 10*, p. 2; Name withheld, *Submission 26*, p. 1. Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16; Geoffrey Steer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 66.

⁵⁸ Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16.

⁵⁹ Dr Josh Roose, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 64–66;

⁶⁰ Australian Christian Lobby, *Submission 39*, p. 2.

⁶¹ LGB Alliance, *Submission 39*, p. 8.

⁶² Cassandra Martin, Managing Lawyer, Q+Law, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33.

⁶³ Dr Josh Roose, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 69.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 69.

FINDING 29: Stronger moderation of online content should target material that incites violence or causes harm without restricting legitimate expression or political debate.

RECOMMENDATION 31: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government to ensure that digital platforms are being held accountable for the role they play in enabling anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes.

3.4.2 Improvements to the safety of dating apps

The Committee heard that offenders use LGBTIQA+ dating apps to identify, contact and lure people into attacks. Stakeholders expressed differing views about the role of dating apps. Some considered that the apps are only ‘the platform that is being used; they are not the cause of the problem’,⁶⁵ whilst others characterised them ‘as key infrastructure for this violence’.⁶⁶

The Committee heard how some dating apps are working to improve user safety and reduce the misuse of their platforms by offenders. For example, Grindr told the Committee it has ‘no higher priority than the safety and wellbeing of our users’⁶⁷ and that it has recently introduced a range of safety measures, such as:

- in-app safety pop-up messages warning users of violence risk
- encouraging users to use trust-building tools before meeting in-person
- applying watermarks to images taken in-app to verify identity
- expanding its Trust and Safety Department.

Similarly, Match Group described its investment in trust and safety, including identity verification, account moderation and transparency reporting.⁶⁸

Given other dating apps failed to participate in this Inquiry, the Committee cannot express confidence that these measures are in any way consistent across the industry, which adds to the difficulty of assessing their effectiveness.

While stakeholders acknowledged evidence of progress, they argued that existing measures remain inconsistent across the sector and are often ‘fragmented and largely reactive’.⁶⁹ They called for further improvements to the safety features of dating apps to better protect users, including through more effective:

- age and identity verification
- in-app safety warnings

⁶⁵ Chad Hughes, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4.

⁶⁶ Thomas Jessup, *Submission 30*, p. 12.

⁶⁷ Joe Hack, Head, Global Government Affairs, Grindr, public hearing, 25 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 1.

⁶⁸ Match Group, *Submission 12.1*, p. 2.

⁶⁹ Thomas Jessup, *Submission 30*, p. 13.

- reporting functions
- collaboration with Victoria Police.

FINDING 30: The Committee acknowledges Grindr and Match Group’s participation in the Inquiry and notes its disappointment that other apps did not participate.

RECOMMENDATION 32: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government for a dedicated inquiry into best practice safety features of dating apps utilised by Australian users, working towards the following goals as associated outcomes for applications operating in Australia:

- Ensure everyone on an adult service can be confident the other users are adults.
- Maintain that no user must disclose or display their identity to use these services or is marked out for declining.
- Action is taken to identify and ban fake profiles and the users who operate them.
- Ensure that evidence still exists when law enforcement requests it, without creating need for services to hold additional data of all users.
- Improve reporting capability without compromising user protections from online harm.
- Implement changes such that the public can see whether these systems work.
- Ensure that regulations are consistently mandated across the sector.

3.4.3 Age and identity verification

The Committee heard that some dating apps have introduced a range of measures to improve age and identity verification.

Grindr told the Committee that Australian users must verify they are over 18⁷⁰ and that it uses various measures, such as age assurance technology, AI detection tools, bot prevention, SMS verification, device authentication and photo verification to identify under-age or malicious users.⁷¹ Grindr reported a ‘significant drop’⁷² in underage activity since introducing these measures. However, it acknowledged that ‘it is not perfect’ and that some users continue to evade the system.⁷³

Match Group, which operates apps including Tinder and Hinge, told the Committee it uses similar identity verification tools to strengthen identity assurance and reduce

⁷⁰ Joe Hack, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 1.

⁷¹ Priyanka Purkayastha, Director, Trust and Safety, Grindr, public hearing, 25 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5; Joe Hack, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6.

⁷² Priyanka Purkayastha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 6.

harmful behaviour. This includes photo and ID verification, as well as Face Check (a mandatory video 'selfie' feature).⁷⁴

Other dating apps reportedly used to facilitate anti-LGBTIQA+ attacks failed to engage with this Inquiry, so the Committee cannot comment about their age or identity verification measures.

Stakeholders argued that stronger age and identity verification could reduce the risk of young people or malicious actors accessing adult dating apps and using fake profiles to lure people.⁷⁵ Daniel Powell highlighted that many hate crimes are committed 'behind faceless profiles'⁷⁶ and argued that being able to link profiles used to cause harm to the individuals behind them would improve accountability.

At the same time, the Committee heard that stronger verification alone will not prevent all attacks, as some offenders use their real identities when creating dating app accounts and are 'not worried about being caught'.⁷⁷ David Brown, speaking about his experience, told the Committee:

I think it is very important that we do age and account verification, but in this instance, I had real photos of the guy and his full name. He thought he was untouchable – that I could give the police full name, face photos and say, 'Go for it,' and they did. Again, I was lucky. Some offenders are not worried about being caught, because they do not think it is going to happen.⁷⁸

The Committee also heard that stronger verification measures must be balanced against the importance of anonymity in the LGBTIQA+ community.⁷⁹ Stakeholders highlighted that dating apps can provide a vital space for people to explore their sexuality and connect with others without disclosing their identity, particularly in unsafe environments.⁸⁰

Stakeholders argued that ideally, age-assurance systems should confirm that someone is eligible to use a dating app 'without retaining or linking identifying personal data'.⁸¹ They emphasised that people should be able to remain anonymous while exploring their sexuality, with platforms maintaining the ability to identify users behind the scenes if they use the platform to cause harm.⁸²

⁷⁴ Match Group, *Submission 12.1*, p. 3.

⁷⁵ Chad Hughes, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4; Professor Adam Bourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16; Daniel Powell, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 42–43; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 27.

⁷⁶ Daniel Powell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 43.

⁷⁷ David Brown, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 43.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 43.

⁷⁹ Joe Hack, *Transcript of evidence* p. 5.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

⁸¹ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 27.

⁸² Helen Bolton, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 57.

FINDING 31: Some dating apps, such as Grindr, have strengthened their age and identity verification measures to improve user safety, with early evidence that these measures are reducing under-age access. However, no verification system is foolproof and determined malicious actors may still find ways to circumvent safeguards. Further, some offenders use their real identities.

FINDING 32: Age and identify verification for LGBTIQ+ dating apps is a difficult balance between user safety and the desire of many users for anonymity.

3.4.4 In-app safety warnings

The Committee heard that dating apps can play an important role in keeping users informed about emerging safety risks through in-app warnings and safety messaging.

Grindr told the Committee that it has worked with Australian organisations, including Thorne Harbour Health, ACON and Meridian, to develop both reactive alerts during periods of increased violence and ‘always-on’ safety messaging.⁸³ These messages encourage safer in-person interactions and direct users to local support services.⁸⁴

Match Group told the Committee it has introduced real-time safety prompts, such as ‘Are You Sure?’ and ‘Does This Bother You?’, to discourage inappropriate messaging and encourage users to report concerning interactions.⁸⁵

Stakeholders commended Grindr for its responsiveness and collaboration with community organisations and Victoria Police.⁸⁶ Victoria Police described Grindr as ‘prompt’⁸⁷ and ‘forthcoming’⁸⁸ in implementing safety messaging, adding that it has not had the same level of engagement with other dating apps.⁸⁹

Stakeholders emphasised that simply providing safety tools is not enough, and that users need regular reminders and public education about the risks and the protections available to them.⁹⁰ The Committee also heard suggestions for additional safety features, including prompts before users share precise locations or move conversations

⁸³ Priyanka Purkayastha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

⁸⁴ Joe Hack, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2; Priyanka Purkayastha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Match Group, *Submission 12.1*, p. 4.

⁸⁶ Caleb Hawk, Deputy Director, Health Promotion and Community Engagement, Thorne Harbour Health, public hearing, Melbourne, 24 June 2026, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11; Jeremy Oliver, Manager, LGBTIQ+ Communities Portfolio, Priority and Safer Communities Division, Victoria Police, public hearing, 25 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26.

⁸⁷ Jeremy Oliver, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 33.

⁹⁰ Joe Hack, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

off-platform,⁹¹ as well as mechanisms that enable platforms to issue location-based safety alerts.⁹²

FINDING 33: Dating apps can play an important role in improving user safety through timely in-app warnings, safety messaging and reporting prompts. Measures include ongoing safety messaging, user education and additional in-app safety features.

3.4.5 Reporting functions

The Committee heard that effective in-app reporting mechanisms are critical to identifying harmful behaviour, responding quickly to serious incidents and preventing offenders from returning to platforms to target further people. When these features fail, offenders may be able to continue using the same dating app to target multiple people. David Brown described this risk:

Through my chats with [the offender] – I had been chatting to them on and off for at least a month. You would see the profile. It would come; it would go. That is not unusual behaviour. My belief now is that every time their profile disappeared, they had assaulted somebody. And that is basically what happened to me. They assaulted me. I was capable of getting myself to hospital. While I was in the waiting room for emergency, I saw their profile reappear with a new profile. They were ready to do it again.

Grindr told the Committee it has made reporting available across ‘every surface of the app’⁹³ and uses structured reporting pathways that prioritise high-risk matters, with reports of ‘serious in-person incidents’⁹⁴ bypassing standard moderation queues and being escalated immediately to specialist staff.⁹⁵ Match Group also highlighted features that encourage users to check in after in-person meetings, offering the option to make a report if they indicate they do not wish to meet their match again.⁹⁶

Stakeholders told the Committee that reporting mechanisms vary across dating apps, with some platforms lacking accessible ways to report hate crimes or access support services.⁹⁷ They argued that reporting systems should be easier to use and should capture more detailed information, including through features such as voice reporting, to enable a more comprehensive understanding of assaults.⁹⁸

⁹¹ Jarryd Bartle, Lecturer, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT, public hearing, 25 June 2026, Melbourne, *Submission 1*, p. 5.

⁹² Thomas Jessup, *Submission 30*, p. 13.

⁹³ Priyanka Purkayastha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Match Group, *Submission 12.1*, p. 4.

⁹⁷ Thomas Jessup, *Submission 30*, p. 11.

⁹⁸ Caleb Hawk, Deputy Director, Health Promotion and Community Engagement, Thorne Harbour Health, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

FINDING 34: Effective in-app reporting and moderation systems are critical to preventing repeat offending and protecting users from further harm.

FINDING 35: While some dating apps have strengthened their reporting systems and demonstrated good practice, reporting mechanisms remain inconsistent across platforms and could be improved.

RECOMMENDATION 33: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government to mandate evidence preservation by default for hate-related content removed by platforms, maintained in law enforcement-accessible archives to support investigation and prosecution.

3

3.4.6 Collaboration with Victoria Police

The Committee heard about the importance of cooperation between dating apps and law enforcement in identifying offenders and supporting investigations into app-facilitated anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes.

Some dating apps highlighted that they already maintain dedicated law enforcement portals and retain certain account information for a set period of time after an account is deleted, enabling police to obtain evidence where requests are made promptly.⁹⁹ Grindr told the Committee that it goes further and ‘proactively reaches out to law enforcement in Australia to better understand the patterns of off-platform harm they are observing so we can improve our own detection capabilities’.¹⁰⁰

Stakeholders told the Committee that anonymous or unverified accounts, delays in obtaining platform data and the removal of online content before police are notified can hinder investigations.¹⁰¹ Stakeholders therefore emphasised the need for timely information sharing and systems that better support law enforcement while protecting users’ privacy.

Grindr also told the Committee that requests from Victoria Police sometimes lack sufficient detail to identify the relevant account, while acknowledging that Victoria Police had been collaborative in providing additional information when requested.¹⁰² This suggests there are opportunities to improve information-sharing practices so that requests contain the information dating apps need to respond efficiently.

⁹⁹ Match Group, *Submission 12.1*, p. 4; Priyanka Purkayastha, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 5–9.

¹⁰⁰ Joe Hack, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ Geoffrey Steer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 66; Jeremy Oliver, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27.

¹⁰² Joe Hack, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

FINDING 36: Effective cooperation between dating apps and law enforcement depends on timely information sharing, clear information requests and systems that enable platforms to support investigations while protecting users' privacy

3.5 Online dating safety and the voluntary code of conduct

The Australian eSafety Commissioner provides advice to help users reduce the risks associated with online dating. This includes guidance on:

- recognising abuse
- protecting personal information
- using safety features
- meeting safely
- reporting harmful behaviour.¹⁰³

The eSafety Commissioner also assists people to access support services and report serious online abuse, including image-based abuse, sextortion and cyber abuse.

The eSafety Commissioner encourages the use of dating apps that participate in the Voluntary Australian Online Dating Code of Conduct (see Table 3.1). This Code of Conduct is an industry-developed code that sets minimum safety standards for dating apps operating in Australia.

Because it is voluntary it cannot be enforced by the Commonwealth Government. However, signatories agree to meet its safety standards, including publishing annual reports and complying with minimum accessibility and safety requirements.

Under the Online Dating Code of Conduct, participating dating apps assess how well they meet its safety standards and receive a public compliance rating. The ratings range from Tier 1, for services that fully meet the Code's requirements, to Tier 3, for services that have not yet met one or more key requirements.

These self-assessments are independently reviewed by the Code Oversight Body, which also oversees compliance through an independent committee that considers complaints and disputes.

¹⁰³ eSafety Commissioner, *Online Safety*, July 2026 <<https://www.esafety.gov.au>> accessed 29 July 2026.

Table 3.1 Australian Online Dating Code Signatories and Self-Assessment Ranking

Code Signatory	Dating Service	Self-Assessment Ranking
Match Group	• Tinder	• Tier 1
	• Hinge	• Tier 1
	• OKCupid	• Tier 1
	• Plenty of Fish	• Tier 1
	• Match.com	• Tier 1
Bumble	• Bumble	• Tier 1
	• Badoo	• Tier 1
ParshipMeet US Holdings, Inc.	• eharmony	• Tier 2
	• MeetMe	• Tier 2
	• Tagged	• Tier 2
	• Skout	• Tier 2
	• Growlr	• Tier 2
Grindr	• Grindr	• Tier 2

Source: Australia Online Dating Code of Conduct, *Current code signatories*, July 2026 <<https://www.australianonlinedatingcode.com.au/current-code-signatories>> accessed 29 July 2026.

Some stakeholders told the Committee that the Online Dating Code of Conduct should be made mandatory by the Commonwealth Government, requiring dating apps to comply with its safety standards.¹⁰⁴

FINDING 37: The Committee is disappointed that the federal eSafety Commissioner declined to participate in this Inquiry.

FINDING 38: The Voluntary Australian Online Dating Code of Conduct establishes minimum safety standards for participating dating apps. However, compliance is voluntary and cannot be legally enforced by the Commonwealth Government.

RECOMMENDATION 34: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government to ensure that all dating apps operating in Australia become signatories to an enforceable and strengthened Australian Online Dating Code. This should ensure other apps that have been implicated in offending, such as Snapchat, be included.

¹⁰⁴ Mischa Barr, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

3.6 Legislative reform

The Committee heard that an effective legislative response to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate should not only hold perpetrators to account after harm occurs but also seek to prevent hate before it escalates. This Section outlines:

- Victoria's recent changes to its anti-vilification laws
- a positive duty to prevent vilification
- an online duty of care.

3.6.1 Victoria's changes to its anti-vilification laws

From 20 September 2025, Victoria introduced two new criminal vilification offences targeting the most serious forms of hate speech and conduct.¹⁰⁵ The two new offences are:

- Incitement offence – which applies where a person intentionally says or does something that could encourage hatred, serious contempt, revulsion or severe ridicule towards another person or group because of a protected attribute, such as their sexual orientation or gender identity. The person must also intend to incite these emotions or believe that their conduct will probably do so.
- Threat offence – which applies where a person threatens another person or group with physical harm or property damage because of a protected attribute, such as their sexual orientation or gender identity. The person must also intend that the recipient will believe the threat will be carried out or it will probably occur.¹⁰⁶

The offences carry maximum penalties of three years' imprisonment for incitement and five years' imprisonment for threats. They apply to conduct occurring in public, private or online, including in closed groups.¹⁰⁷

Stakeholders expressed strong support for Victoria's new anti-vilification laws, describing them as a 'welcome and necessary step in the right direction'¹⁰⁸ and acknowledging that Victoria is 'ahead of other jurisdictions'.¹⁰⁹

Other stakeholders, though, were concerned that these new laws 'raises serious concerns about legitimate religious expression'.¹¹⁰ Joe Ball, Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities, contextualised the legislation as a response to rising

¹⁰⁵ Department of Justice and Community Safety, *New criminal laws against serious vilification start on 20 September 2025*, 12 March 2026, <<https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026-04/Fact-sheet-Serious-vilification-criminal-offences.pdf>> accessed 29 July 2026.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Savanh Tanhchareun, Senior Adviser, International Policy, Equality Australia, public hearing, 24 June 2026, Melbourne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Australian Christian Lobby, *Submission 49*, p. 6.

anti-LGBTIQ+ hatred, emphasising that its purpose was to protect communities rather than restrict expression, noting:

I think it is incredibly important, and we must remember where the anti-vilification legislation came from, or maybe the additional energy to implement that legislation came from. It was when we had an anti-transgender protest on the steps of Parliament House, where neo-Nazis went to the fore and dropped a banner that said ‘Die paedo freaks’ – imagery that went all the way around the world. People saw that banner in front of our Victorian Parliament House, and for that reason and many other reasons, I have been a keen advocate and supporter and continue to support the rolling out of the anti-vilification legislation¹¹¹

The Committee heard that it is too early to assess the effectiveness of the new offences, with stakeholders noting that they had only recently commenced and were ‘still only just beginning to take effect’.¹¹²

FINDING 39: Victoria has introduced new criminal offences targeting the most serious forms of vilification. Stakeholders expressed strong support for the laws. However, there is not yet sufficient evidence to assess their impact on reducing anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes.

3.6.2 A positive duty to eliminate vilification

To date, Victoria’s anti-vilification reforms have focused on strengthening the criminal law by introducing offences that criminalise the most serious forms of incitement and threats directed at people because of a protected attribute.

However, some stakeholders argued that a more preventative approach is needed, via a positive duty to prevent vilification before it occurs. They argued that this should build on the existing positive duty to eliminate discrimination under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic) as this would shift the focus from responding to complaints after harm has occurred to prevention.¹¹³ As Thorne Harbour Health argued, moving the regulatory model from reactive to preventive reflects the idea that ‘vilification is a precursor to violence’.¹¹⁴

Stakeholders suggested the duty would require organisations to take ‘reasonable and proportionate’¹¹⁵ steps to prevent vilification, such as implementing policies and staff training, while also empowering the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission to investigate systemic issues and promote compliance. These reforms would need to be accompanied by additional resources for the Commission to enable it to carry out these functions effectively.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Joe Ball, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40.

¹¹² LGB Alliance Australia, *Submission 39*, p. 12.

¹¹³ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 25; Heather Corkhill, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28; Cassandra Martin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35; Dr Sean Mulcahy, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 53; Kath Brackett, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 54.

¹¹⁴ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 25.

¹¹⁵ Dr Sean Mulcahy, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

¹¹⁶ Cassandra Martin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

FINDING 40: Several stakeholders supported introducing a positive duty to prevent vilification, thereby shifting Victoria's approach from responding to harm after it occurs to preventing vilification before it escalates.

3.6.3 Online duty of care

In a similar vein, the Committee heard that introducing a digital duty of care would complement existing laws by requiring online platforms to proactively identify and reduce the risk of harm, rather than relying on individuals to report harmful conduct after it occurs.¹¹⁷ Heather Corkhill, Equality Australia, submitted that such a duty would 'shift the onus off individual victims'¹¹⁸ and instead place responsibility 'squarely on those that are providing the service'.¹¹⁹

Thorne Harbour Health noted that the Commonwealth's review of the *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) recommended an enforceable duty requiring platforms to proactively identify and mitigate systemic risks, including harms based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It told the Committee that the Commonwealth has committed to legislating such a duty.¹²⁰

Stakeholders suggested that Victoria could support these reforms by advocating for hate-based harms to be expressly recognised within the duty and, if the duty is implemented, by sharing intelligence with the eSafety Commissioner.¹²¹

FINDING 41: The Commonwealth's review of the *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) recommended an enforceable digital duty of care requiring online platforms to proactively identify and mitigate systemic harms. The Commonwealth has committed to legislating this.

RECOMMENDATION 35: That the Victorian Government advocate to the Commonwealth Government to consider ways in which it can hold platforms liable for algorithms driving people to hateful content that incites violence.

**Adopted by the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee
Parliament of Victoria, East Melbourne
19 August 2026**

¹¹⁷ Geoffrey Steer, *Submission 19*, p. 6; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 27; Heather Corkhill, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29; Cassandra Martin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

¹¹⁸ Heather Corkhill, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 35*, p. 27.

¹²¹ Thorne Harbour Health, response to questions on notice received on 7 July 2026, p. 4.

Appendix A

About the Inquiry

A.1 Submissions

No.	Author
1	Jarryd Bartle
2	Name withheld
3	Name withheld
4	Anastasia Le
5	Merrin Wake
6	Aleph Melbourne
7	Lesbian Action Group
8	Confidential
9	Imogen O'Shannessy
10	Name withheld
11	Confidential
12	Match Group
13	Family Access Network (FAN)
14	Name withheld
15	InterAction for Health and Human Rights
16	Name withheld
17	Confidential
18	Matthew Roberts
19	Geoffrey Steer
20	Dr Ka Chun Tse
21	Name withheld
22	Lachlan Stonehouse
23	Confidential
24	Confidential
25	Ilias Katis
26	Name withheld
27	Dr Sophie Pilbeam
28	Castan Centre for Human Rights Law
29	Zoe Belle Gender Collective
30	Thomas Jessup

No.	Author
31	Equality Australia
32	Confidential
33	Andy Porter
34	Name withheld
35	Thorne Harbour Health
36	Victims of Crime Commissioner
37	Daniel Powell
38	Your Community Health (YourCH)
39	LGB Alliance Australia
40	RMIT Digital Ethnography Research Centre and RMIT Social Equity Research Centre
41	Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (CFECFW)
42	RMIT School of Law
43	Victorian Trades Hall Council
44	Our Watch
45	Self Advocacy Resource Unit
46	Jesuit Social Services
47	VMIAC
48	Transgender Victoria
49	Australian Christian Lobby (ACL)
50	Project Respect
51	Centre for Innovative Justice (CIJ) – RMIT University
52	Nillumbik Shire Council
53	LGBTIQ+ Health Australia
54	Merri-bek City Council
55	Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)
56	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC)
57	Mikhael Tuma

No.	Author
58	National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
59	Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF)
60	Presbyterian Church of Victoria – Gospel, Church and Nation Committee (PCV-GCNC)
61	Allan Goedecke
62	Emerald City Kickball Melbourne
63	Drummond Street Services
64	Dr Justin Ellis and Professor Nicole Asquith
65	Forcibly Displaced People Network (FDPN)
66	Sexual Assault Services Victoria (SASVic)
67	Sunraynbow Connection Mildura
68	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)
69	Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS)
70	Switchboard Victoria

No.	Author
71	Q+Law
72	Safe and Equal
73	Bi+ Pride Victoria
74	Rainbow Local Government
75	Confidential
76	Darebin City Council
77	Inner Melbourne Community Legal (IMCL)
78	Pride in Law and Liberty Victoria
79	South-East Monash Legal Service and Justice Q
80	Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria
81	Respect Victoria
82	The Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities
83	DFFH
84	Simon Ruth

A.2 Public hearings

24 June 2026

Committee Hearing Room 3, St Andrews Place, East Melbourne, VIC

Witness	Position and Organisation
Jenna Tuke	Chief Executive Officer, Switchboard
Maya Ellazam	Senior Policy, Advocacy and Communications Lead, Switchboard
Chad Hughes	Chief Executive Officer, Thorne Harbour Health
Caleb Hawk	Deputy Director, Health Promotion and Community Engagement, Thorne Harbour Health
Adam Bourne	Director, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society
Cassandra Martin	Managing Lawyer, Q+Law
Sebastian Sharp	Senior Policy and Education Lead, Q+Law
Savanh Tanhchareun	Senior Advisor, Equality Australia
Heather Corkhill	Legal Director, Equality Australia
Merrin Wake	–
Daniel Powell	–
David Brown	–

Witness	Position and Organisation
Matthew Roberts	–
Kath Brackett	Director Community and Sector Development, Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)
Sean Mulcahy	Policy Advisor, Victorian Pride Lobby, Victorian Pride Lobby, Rainbow Local Government
Jan Farrell	Campaign Co-Lead, Rainbow Local Government, Victorian Pride Lobby, Rainbow Local Government
Tony Briffa	Former Mayor of Hobsons Bay
Dr Josh Roose	–
Geoffrey Steer	–

25 June 2026

Committee Hearing Room 3, 55 St Andrews Place, East Melbourne, VIC

Witness	Position and Organisation
Priyanka Purkayastha	Director for Customer Experience, Grindr
Joe Hack	Head of Global Government Affairs, Grindr
Jarryd Bartle	Lecturer, Criminology & Justice Studies, RMIT
Justin Ellis	Senior Lecturer in Criminology, University of Newcastle
Nicole Asquith	School of Justice, Queensland University of Technology
Brett Curran	Partnerships and Safe Communities, Victoria Police
Jeremy Oliver	LGBTIQA+ Communities Portfolio Manager, Priority and Safer Communities Division, Victoria Police
Joe Ball	Commissioner, Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities
Elizabeth Langdon	Victims of Crime Commissioner, Victims of Crime Commissioner
Melanie Thomson	Acting General Manager, The Men's Project, Jesuit Social Services
Mischa Barr	Policy & Advocacy Lead, Jesuit Social Services
Helen Bolton	Chief Executive Officer, Respect Victoria
Laura Vines	Manager, Prevention Policy and Influence, Respect Victoria

Extract of proceedings

Extracts of proceedings Legislative Council Standing Order 23.20(5) requires the Committee to include in its report all divisions on a question relating to the adoption of the draft report. All Members have a deliberative vote. In the event of an equality of votes, the Chair also has a casting vote.

The Committee divided on the following questions during consideration of this report. Questions agreed to without division are not recorded in these extracts.

Committee meeting – 19 August 2026

Chapter 1 – Understanding anti-LGBTIQ+ behaviour in Victoria

Mr Galea moved, that in Chapter 1 the following text be added:

‘wholly or partially’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 5	Noes 1
Joe McCracken	Ann-Marie Hermans
Michael Galea	
Rachel Payne	
Aiv Puglielli	
Sheena Watt	

Question agreed to.

Ms Hermans moved, that in Chapter 1 the following text be deleted:

‘mainly due to the relative permissibility of homophobic acts in society’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 1	Noes 5
Ann-Marie Hermans	Joe McCracken
	Michael Galea
	Rachel Payne
	Aiv Puglielli
	Sheena Watt

Question negated.

Mr Puglielli moved, that in Chapter 1 the following Recommendation be added:

‘That the Victorian Government work with Rainbow Mob and community organisations to address high levels of underreporting and self-determine an integrated, culturally appropriate response to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crime.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 4	Noes 2
Michael Galea	Joe McCracken
Rachel Payne	Ann-Marie Hermans
Aiv Puglielli	
Sheena Watt	

Question agreed.

Mr Puglielli moved, that in Chapter 1 the following Recommendation be added:

‘That the Victorian Government invest in community-led efforts working to address violence against trans people, including within intimate relationship contexts while also recognising the disproportionate rates of online hate and violence perpetrated against trans people.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 5	Noes 1
Michael Galea	Joe McCracken
Ann-Marie Hermans	
Rachel Payne	
Aiv Puglielli	
Sheena Watt	

Question agreed to.

Chapter 2 – Responses to anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes

Mr Galea moved, that in Chapter 2 the following text be added:

‘particularly within disproportionately impacted communities like Rainbow Mob and trans and gender-diverse communities.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 4	Noes 2
Michael Galea	Joe McCracken
Rachel Payne	Ann-Marie Hermans
Aiv Puglielli	
Sheena Watt	

Question agreed to.

Mr Puglielli moved, that in Chapter 2 the following Recommendation be added:

‘That the Victorian Government establish a Hate Crimes Unit within Victoria Police to lead investigations and prosecutions of hate crimes and hate related incidents.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 2	Noes 4
Joe McCracken	Michael Galea
Aiv Puglielli	Ann-Marie Hermans
	Rachel Payne
	Sheena Watt

Question negatived.

Ms Hermans moved, that in Chapter 2 the following Finding be deleted:

‘Independent oversight mechanisms, such as a ‘Scrutiny Panel’ or similar body, could strengthen accountability, improve police practice and increase community confidence in police responses to hate crime.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 2	Noes 4
Joe McCracken	Michael Galea
Ann-Marie Hermans	Rachel Payne
	Aiv Puglielli
	Sheena Watt

Question negatived.

Mr Puglielli moved, that in Chapter 2 the following Recommendation be deleted:

‘That the Victorian Government consider the merits of establishing a ‘Scrutiny Panel’, or similar body and report publicly on its findings.’

And be replaced with the following Recommendation:

‘That the Victorian Government establish a Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel to provide community-led oversight of the policing response to hate crimes, based on the United Kingdom model.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 1	Noes 5
Aiv Puglielli	Joe McCracken
	Michael Galea
	Ann-Marie Hermans
	Rachel Payne
	Sheena Watt

Question negatived.

Ms Hermans moved, that in Chapter 2 the following Recommendation be deleted:

‘That the Victorian Government review funding to community organisations to ensure they are adequately and securely resourced to meet growing demand.’

And be replaced with the following Recommendation:

‘That the Victorian Government provide transparency to the public about all funded community organisations that support the LGBTIQ+ community to ensure there is balanced and reasonable funds to address any growing concerns or incidents.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 2	Noes 4
Joe McCracken	Michael Galea
Ann-Marie Hermans	Rachel Payne
	Aiv Puglielli
	Sheena Watt

Question negatived.

Mr Puglielli moved, that in Chapter 2 the following Recommendation be deleted:

‘That the Victorian Government consider the merits of establishing a ‘Scrutiny Panel’, or similar body and report publicly on its findings.’

And be replaced with the following Recommendation:

‘That the Victorian Government establish a Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel to provide community-led oversight of the policing response to hate crimes, based on the United Kingdom model.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 1	Noes 5
Aiv Puglielli	Joe McCracken
	Michael Galea
	Ann-Marie Hermans
	Rachel Payne
	Sheena Watt

Question negated.

Mr Galea moved, that in Chapter 2 the following Recommendation be added:

‘That the Victorian Government consider amending the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic) to ensure that the publication of aggravated hate-based offences is covered by post-and-boast laws.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 4	Noes 2
Joe McCracken	Ann-Marie Hermans
Michael Galea	Aiv Puglielli
Rachel Payne	
Sheena Watt	

Question agreed to.

Chapter 3 – Preventing anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes

Ms Hermans moved, that in Chapter 3 the following text be deleted:

‘Professor Bourne told the Committee that these programs should ‘go a step further in tackling prejudice face on’, by providing training for teachers to have conversations among students. Heather Corkhill recommended that the Victorian Government provide resourcing to properly evaluate the success of individual education programs in preventing anti-LGBTIQA+ sentiment and further fund the expansion of programs deemed to be effective.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 2	Noes 4
Joe McCracken	Michael Galea
Ann-Marie Hermans	Rachel Payne
	Aiv Puglielli
	Sheena Watt

Question negated.

Ms Hermans moved, that in Chapter 3 the following Finding be deleted:

‘School education initiatives are important tools which can facilitate conversations and improve equality outcomes for the LGBTIQA+ community.’

And be replaced with the following Finding:

‘School education initiatives already have programs to facilitate conversations to improve understanding and awareness of the LGBTIQA+ community. Studies need to determine whether these programs are helping or hindering hate crimes, and whether they are making the LGBTIQA+ community more or less safe.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 1	Noes 5
Ann-Marie Hermans	Joe McCracken
	Michael Galea
	Rachel Payne
	Aiv Puglielli
	Sheena Watt

Question negatived.

Mr Puglielli moved, that in Chapter 3 the following Recommendation be added:

‘That the Victorian Government expand inclusion and respectful relationships education in schools to ensure they are effectively representing LGBTIQA+ identities and providing alternatives to harmful gender norms.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 4	Noes 2
Michael Galea	Joe McCracken
Rachel Payne	Ann-Marie Hermans
Aiv Puglielli	
Sheena Watt	

Question agreed to.

Mr Puglielli moved, that in Chapter 3 the following Recommendation be added:

‘That the Victorian Government expand media literacy education in schools to support the identification of dis- and misinformation.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 4	Noes 2
Michael Galea	Joe McCracken
Rachel Payne	Ann-Marie Hermans
Aiv Puglielli	
Sheena Watt	

Question agreed to.

Mr Galea moved, that in Chapter 3 the following text be added:

‘strong’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 4	Noes 2
Michael Galea	Joe McCracken
Rachel Payne	Ann-Marie Hermans
Aiv Puglielli	
Sheena Watt	

Question agreed to.

Mr Galea moved, that in Chapter 3 the following Finding be deleted:

‘Victoria has introduced new criminal offences targeting the most serious forms of vilification. There is not yet sufficient evidence to assess their impact on reducing anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes.’

And replaced with the following Finding:

‘Victoria has introduced new criminal offences targeting the most serious forms of vilification. Stakeholders expressed strong support for the laws, however there is not yet sufficient evidence to assess their impact on reducing anti-LGBTIQA+ hate crimes.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 4	Noes 2
Michael Galea	Joe McCracken
Rachel Payne	Ann-Marie Hermans
Aiv Puglielli	
Sheena Watt	

Question agreed to.

Mr Puglielli moved, that in Chapter 3 the following Recommendation be added:

‘That the Victorian Government impose an enforceable positive duty to eliminate vilification in section 15 of the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, requiring duty-holders to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate vilification before it turns into violence.’

The question was put. **The Committee divided.**

Ayes 1	Noes 5
Aiv Puglielli	Joe McCracken
	Michael Galea
	Ann-Marie Hermans
	Rachel Payne
	Sheena Watt

Question negatived.

Minority report

Legal & Social Issues Committee

Inquiry into Anti-LGBTQIA+ Hate Crimes in Victoria

Minority Report, authored by Aiv Puglielli MP

Victorian Greens spokesperson for LGBTQIA+ Equality

From the outset I'd like to thank the many people whose written submissions and in-person testimony strongly informed the work this committee undertook over several months.

This Inquiry speaks into what is a national conversation around immense hate being targeted at LGBTQIA+ people, and through the Greens establishing this Inquiry in Victoria it has positioned our state to lead reforms needed across jurisdictions to truly address and grapple with this crisis. The Greens will continue to champion this work.

I'd personally like to acknowledge Thorne Harbour Health, particularly CEO Chad Hughes and former CEO Simon Ruth, without whom this Inquiry would not have been possible. I also thank Jenna Tuke at Switchboard and Victorian Commissioner for LGBTQIA+ Communities Joe Ball, whose insights were also crucial in helping the committee understand current support pathways and what the response to this crisis has felt like on the ground.

When I was a week on 18, I first downloaded Grindr. Many LGBTQIA+ people use these dating apps and for much of the community they are a part of social life. It has sent fear throughout the community to see these spaces used to facilitate targeted violence against people for being who they are, or for loving who they love.

People want our online spaces to be safe. They also want to ensure that anonymity can be maintained. Failure to balance these elements will drive users to other online spaces which are less regulated, and less safe.

There is work to do, and I implore our governments to collaborate across jurisdictions to build on this Inquiry.

Simply creating new offences or making existing ones appear more 'tough' has never worked to protect people. It would be a disservice to the LGBTQIA+ people who have contributed to this Inquiry for criminal offences and convictions to dominate the response to what this Inquiry has seen, heard, and examined.

We must address anti-LGBTQIA+ attitudes and build on prevention. We need to address the history of harms perpetrated against LGBTQIA+ communities in this state. We must build into our institutions, and into law, equality for LGBTQIA+ people. We must ensure people are not enduring hate and violence, only to then be turned away by the institutions that should serve and protect us.

To quote Simon Ruth's personal submission to this Inquiry:

"Unlike many other communities who face violence and abuse, when it happens to LGBTIQ people we don't go home to households full of others like us who understand what we have gone through. LGBTIQ people are often alone, without lifelong established support networks. We may not yet be out, if we ever come out. We may not have anyone to turn to. We may be ashamed of ourselves and blame ourselves for what has happened. We fear our family and friends will blame us. Police will blame us. Doctors will blame us. So, we don't discuss it, we just put it away."

- **Simon Ruth**, written submission page 3

There are a number of important and powerful findings and recommendations which appear in the substantive report issued by the Committee.

Noting my above reflections on the past several months, the evidence and testimony we examined, and what I personally feel will help address the targeted hate that is being directed towards LGBTQIA+ people in this state, I make the following further recommendations to be viewed alongside those recommended by this substantive Inquiry report:

RECOMMENDATION: That the Victorian Government reform the historical homosexual convictions scheme in Part 8 of the Sentencing Act 1991 to:

- a) include resisting arrest and making false statements to police within the definition of 'historical homosexual offence'; and
- b) incorporate a redress scheme, based on the Tasmanian model.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Victorian Government establish a Hate Crimes Unit within Victoria Police to lead investigations and prosecutions of hate crimes and hate related incidents, with specialist digital investigation capacity and a mandate for interjurisdictional coordination with counterpart units and Commonwealth agencies.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Victorian Government establish a Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel to provide community-led oversight of the policing response to hate crimes, based on the United Kingdom model.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Victorian Government impose an enforceable positive duty to eliminate vilification in Section 15 of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, requiring duty-holders to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate vilification before it turns into violence.

I again thank all who made this Inquiry possible, including my Greens colleagues who supported me in establishing this Inquiry through the Legislative Council, and for colleagues across the aisle who supported and engaged with it.

In solidarity,

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aiv Puglielli'.

Aiv Puglielli MLC

North-Eastern Metropolitan Region
Participating Member
Legal & Social Issues Committee

Co-Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anasina Gray-Barberio'.

Anasina Gray-Barberio MLC

Northern Metropolitan Region
Committee Member
Legal & Social Issues Committee

