

Religious freedom - Victoria update

The Victorian State Election may be 15 months away, but there is a lot to do before then.

This is our window to rally denominations, churches, and everyday believers to push back against some of the most dangerous laws in the country — laws that are already eroding religious freedom, and others that are quietly on the way.

The key issues we're tracking in Victoria include:

The Cults Inquiry

New Anti-vilification legislation

Voluntary Assisted Dying amendments

Education policies targeting faith-based expression

Freedom for Faith's submission to the Victorian Inquiry into cults and coercive control warns that vague definitions risk infringing on religious freedom. It commends the goal of preventing abuse but cautions that expanding terms like "cult" or "coercive control" could mislabel mainstream religious practices — such as strong moral teachings, exclusivity, or communal life — as harmful.

The submission notes that coercion involves manipulation or threats, not voluntary belief. Common religious activities like offering belonging or spiritual teaching may be wrongly treated as cultic. Media pressure may further blur these lines. Under international law, particularly the ICCPR, religious freedom is a protected, non-derogable right.

Our submission calls for clear, narrow definitions to protect faith communities from unjust regulation and preserve Australia's commitment to freedom of belief.

[Read more](#)

Victorian Anti-Vilification Legislation

The Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion) Act 2025 expands protections against hate speech in Victoria but has raised concerns about religious freedom. Vague terms like “serious contempt” and “revulsion” could be applied subjectively, risking censorship of traditional beliefs. While the Act includes exemptions for religious expression, they only apply if speech is “reasonable and in good faith”— a standard we believe is unclear.

There are fears the law may criminalise or suppress faith-based views on sexuality and gender, and that civil complaint mechanisms could be misused against religious individuals or institutions. Although the government amended the Bill to clarify exemptions, we are continuing to support faith leaders who continue to seek stronger safeguards for religious expression and belief.

[Read more](#)

Voluntary Assisted Dying amendments

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Amendment (Equity and Access) Bill 2024 proposes significant changes that raise serious concerns for religious freedom. Most notably, it removes the right of health practitioners to conscientiously object to providing information about voluntary assisted dying (VAD), forcing them to participate in ways that may conflict with their beliefs.

The bill also expands who can discuss and administer VAD, including non-physicians. Introduced by Greens MLC Sarah Mansfield, the bill responds to a 2024 review which claimed religious objections were creating access barriers.

Critics warn this prioritises access over freedom of conscience. The bill has passed second reading in the Legislative Council and is currently under committee review before returning to Parliament for further debate.

The Allan Government has signaled its intention to amend the legislation, which would include compelling health practitioners to provide information.

[Read more](#)

Victorian Education policies

The Victorian Government's education policies increasingly restrict religious freedom by promoting a secular worldview and limiting parental rights.

Special Religious Instruction has been sidelined, while programs like *Respectful Relationships* and *Sexuality and Consent Education* mandate teachings on gender and sexuality that often conflict with traditional faith-based beliefs. Parents cannot opt their children out, reducing their ability to guide moral education.

The Mature Minors policy allows students to make significant decisions, such as accessing gender or sexual health services, without parental consent—further weakening family involvement. Proposed reforms also threaten the autonomy of religious schools in hiring staff aligned with their values.

Together, these policies risk undermining pluralism and the ability of faith communities to live out their beliefs in public education settings.

[Read more](#)

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ABOUT US

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