

# Media Release

**Jaclyn Symes MLC**

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Attorney-General

Minister for Emergency Services



Thursday, 25 August 2022

## REDUCING THE CHILL OF DEFAMATION ON VICTIM-SURVIVORS

Victorians can now have their say on a suite of nation-wide reforms to harmonise defamation laws and encourage victim-survivors to report criminal and unlawful behaviour without the fear of being sued.

Attorneys-General from across the states and territories agreed to public consultation on the proposed national defamation laws at their meeting on 12 August 2022.

Victoria is leading consultation on proposals to overcome the chilling effect of current defamation laws, where the threat of being sued for defamation acts as a deterrent for many victim-survivors to sharing and reporting their experience of sexual harassment and assault.

The proposed changes also aim to reduce the emotional and financial toll associated with defending a defamation claim.

The proposals aim to strike the right balance between protecting victim-survivors from claims of defamation when making a report to police and other bodies, while maintaining appropriate safeguards to limit any improper reputational damage. No changes are proposed to statements made to media outlets.

As part of the national harmonisation plan, New South Wales is also calling on Australians to provide feedback on proposed defamation laws relating to material published online, including on search engines and social media sites.

The proposed amendments follow a discussion paper published in 2021, which received almost 50 written submissions, including from legal professionals, academics, technology and media companies, and community legal service organisations.

The Victorian-led exposure draft and consultation paper are available on [Engage Victoria](#). Submissions close on 5 October.

### Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

*"Victim-survivors should be able to report and share what happened to them without the threat of defamation hanging over their heads."*

*"These changes will remove another barrier that can prevent victim-survivors coming forward to share their experiences."*