GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Public Invited to Submit Comments on Proposed Sexual Offences Bill, 2025

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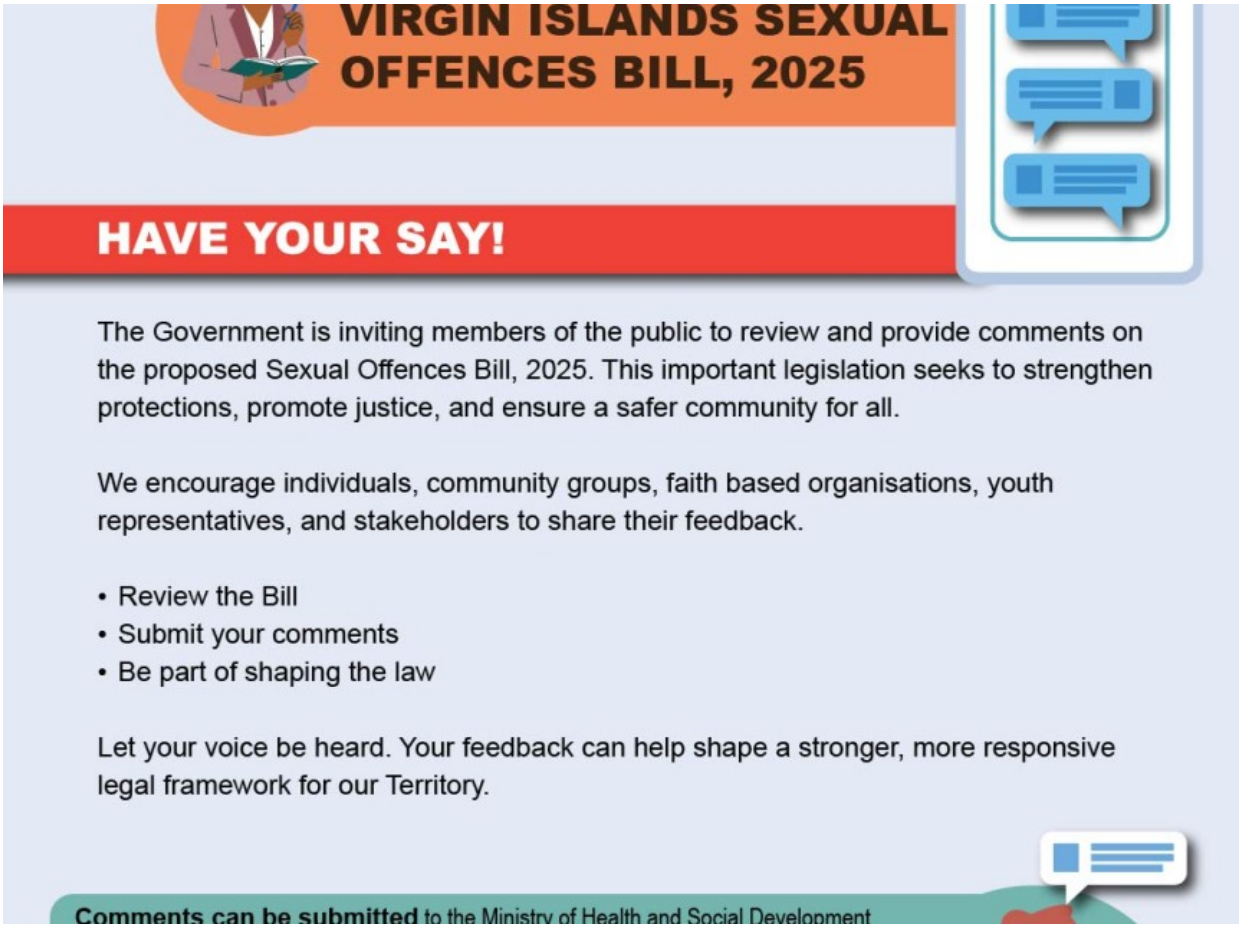

The Government of the Virgin Islands is inviting residents and stakeholders to submit comments and feedback on the proposed Sexual Offences Bill, 2025, as part of a Territory wide public consultation.

The proposed Bill represents a comprehensive modernisation of the Virgin Islands' sexual offences laws. It consolidates existing provisions and introduces updated measures to address rape and sexual assault, child sexual abuse, abuse of positions of trust, human trafficking and sexual exploitation, online offences including the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and protections for persons with mental disorders.

The Bill also strengthens evidential rules, clarifies the statutory definition of consent, enhances anonymity protections for complainants, and proposes penalties that reflect the seriousness of sexual offences.

Minister for Health and Social Development, Honourable Vincent O. Wheatley, emphasised the importance of public engagement in the legislative process.

Honourable Wheatley said, "This Bill represents a significant step forward in strengthening protections for children, vulnerable persons, and survivors of sexual violence in the Virgin Islands. However, legislation of this importance must be shaped by the people it serves. I encourage residents, advocacy groups, legal professionals, faith-based organisations, and young people to carefully review the Discussion Paper and provide their feedback. Your voices are essential to ensuring that the final law is balanced, effective, and reflective of our Territory's values".

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Social Development, Ms. Tasha Bertie, also highlighted the consultative approach being taken.

Ms. Bertie said, "The Ministry is committed to a transparent and inclusive consultation process. We are seeking practical feedback on the clarity of the definitions, the appropriateness of the penalties, and the overall balance between victim protection and the rights of the accused. Public input will directly inform revisions to the Bill before it is presented to Cabinet and the House of Assembly."

Members of the public are encouraged to review the Discussion Paper and respond to the consultation questions contained within it.

Comments may be submitted:

• By email to ministryofhealth@gov.vg
• By mail to Virgin Islands Sexual Offences Bill Review, Ministry of Health and Social Development, Vorinica’s House of Commerce, Long Bush, Tortola, Virgin Islands
• At public consultation sessions, which will be announced shortly

The deadline for submissions is 31 March 31 2026.

Copies of the Discussion Paper and the proposed Bill are available at the Ministry of Health and Social Development.

The Government remains committed to strengthening the legal framework to prevent, prosecute, and punish sexual offences while ensuring that victims receive adequate protection and support. Residents are encouraged to participate in this important process and help shape the future of justice in the Virgin Islands.

For Additional Information Contact:

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Additional Documents or Media

- 20260302_press_release_comments_invited_proposed_sexual_offences_bill_1).pdf
- discussion_paper_on_the_sexual_offences_bill_final_1).pdf
- sexual_offences_bill,_2025_1).pdf