

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

*Sixty-fifth Report — Overview of petitions 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023 — Tabling*

**HON PETER FOSTER (Mining and Pastoral)** [10.03 pm]: I am directed to present the sixty-fifth report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs titled *Overview of petitions 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023*.

[See paper [3011](#).]

**Hon PETER FOSTER:** The report that I have just tabled advises the house of the petitions that were finalised by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs in the second half of 2023. During this period, the committee concluded its inquiries on 17 petitions. This is the fifth such report I have had the pleasure of tabling in the house.

Part 1 of the report outlines the petitions process. Once tabled in this house, a petition is automatically referred to the committee. The committee will carry out inquiries and then decide how to proceed. Part 1 also notes the increasing trend for petitions to be followed by numerous emails to the committee. At times, those emails have pro forma and copied and pasted content. These communications do not further the case of the petitioners or add value for the committee. They take up the administrative time of committee members and staff, whose time would be better spent on the issues raised in the petitions. This practice is not encouraged by the committee and ought not to be encouraged by members.

Part 2 of the report outlines the 17 petitions that were finalised in this reporting period, including the reasons for finalisation. The petitions finalised covered a range of subject matters. Many petitions related to planning issues. These included petition 80, regarding the sealing of the remainder of Goldfields Highway; petition 90, regarding Shalom House; petition 98, regarding the upgrade of the East Road–Wanneroo Road intersection; and petition 100, regarding the proposed great southern landfill site.

Other subject matters covered included the murder of Stacey Thorne; LGBTQIA+ rights; protection of children from harmful hypersexualised advertising; religious freedom; review of the justice system; transparency regarding the Voice; the Cat Act; the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act; discrimination against unborn children with Down syndrome; and faith-based schools.

Petitions 85 and 86 were tabled in the Legislative Council on the same date. They were presented by the same principal petitioner and tabling member and were similar in their requests. The committee therefore resolved to consider them together. Both were finalised following a response from the Attorney General.

In the case of some petitions, the matter raised was resolved outside the committee process, resulting in the finalisation of the petition. An example of this was petition 90, which raised concerns about Shalom House operating a rehabilitation facility at a site in Craigie. While the committee was considering this petition, a number of news articles were published reporting that the proposal for a centre at that site had been abandoned, following proceedings in the State Administrative Tribunal.

Many petitions were finalised following a response by the government. In some cases, this response indicated that the issues raised were being dealt with by the appropriate authorities, or that action was already underway. This was the case with petition 98, which related to the upgrade of East Road–Wanneroo Road intersection. The Minister for Transport advised in their response that Main Roads was undertaking design investigations, which would also investigate and consider the concerns raised in the petition. In light of that information, the petition was finalised by the committee.

In other cases, the issue being raised was dealt with by the Legislative Council. Petition 99 was an example of this. Related legislation was given its third reading on 20 September 2023, and given royal assent on 27 September 2023. The tabling member had introduced proposed amendments that reflected the concerns of the petitioners during the bill's passage. The committee therefore decided on 18 October 2023 not to conduct any further inquiries into the matter and to finalise the petition. At the end of this reporting period, the committee was continuing its inquiries into 24 open petitions. They are listed in part 3 of the report.

The committee takes this opportunity to again thank all tabling members, and to encourage them to provide a written submission to the committee after a petition has been tabled. The committee also notes the ongoing trial of the e-petition system, which has been extended to run until 31 October 2024. The committee continues to consider the trial successful thus far. Thirteen of the petitions finalised within this reporting period were initiated as e-petitions, and 19 of the petitions still under consideration at the end of the reporting period came to the committee through the e-petition system.

I commend the report to the house.