

FACT SHEET FOR PRINCIPAL PETITIONERS: THE PETITION PROCESS

What is a petition?

A petition is a written request for action. Petitions are a way for residents of Western Australia to directly make their views or concerns known to Parliament. Petitions can be presented in hardcopy, or electronically. Petitions that are presented electronically are called 'e-petitions.' E-petitions can be shared online to collect signatures electronically; paper petitions must be signed in person.

There are rules about how a petition must be formatted and what information it must contain. If a petition does not meet these requirements, it cannot be presented to Parliament.

If you want to prepare a paper petition, it is recommended that you use the standard petition form which can be found on the website [here](#).¹ If you want to prepare an e-petition, you should use the portal on the Parliament website [here](#).²

Who is the 'principal petitioner'?

The person who initiates or organises a petition (or e-petition) is known as the 'principal petitioner', and is the main contact person for the petition.

As the principal petitioner, you must provide your original handwritten signature (for paper petitions) and full contact details on the petition. This information is used to update you on any response or follow-up to the petition. Your contact details will be kept private.

What happens after a petition is signed?

You must ask a Member of the Legislative Council to present the petition (or e-petition) to Parliament on your behalf (also known as 'tabling' the petition). The Member who tables the petition is known as the 'tabling Member'.

When a petition is tabled it is read aloud by the tabling Member so that all Members are made aware of the content of the petition.

What happens after the petition is tabled?

All petitions that have been tabled are sent to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs for enquiry.

The Committee will write or send an email asking you to provide more information about your petition and why you support or oppose the policy or decision. This is called making a submission.

The tabling Member is also invited to provide a submission.

¹<https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/commit.nsf/WCurrentNameNew/5A73802849C79D1E48257831003B03B2?OpenDocument#current>

² <https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/lcepetitions.nsf/petitions>

Your submission

Your submission helps the Committee understand your viewpoint and your reason for making the petition. It should be no more than two pages.

The Committee understands that writing a short submission about complex issues can be difficult. It may be helpful to remember that your submission helps the Committee understand your concerns and provide a *starting point* for the Committee's enquiries. The Committee will let you know if it needs further information from you.

Can I show other people my submission?

The Committee requires you to keep your submission private until it decides to publish it. This means you must not disclose or circulate your submission unless the Committee decides to make your submission public.

Most submissions are made public. Sometimes the Committee will decide to keep a submission (or parts of it) private. The Committee may decide to keep your submission private because (but not limited to) it reveals personal information about someone, contains inappropriate language or makes allegations about other people. For this reason, you must be careful about the language and content of your submission if you wish it to be publically available.

Submissions made public by the Committee will usually be posted on the Committee's website.

What if I don't want my submission to be public?

You should let the Committee know if you want your submission to remain private or not be available on the website.

What happens after I make my written submission?

The Committee may ask the relevant decision-maker(s) to provide a written response to your petition and submission. In most cases, this will be government Ministers and local government authorities. The Committee may be satisfied that the decision-makers(s) response(s) address the issues raised in the petition. If not, the Committee will make further enquiries.

From time to time, the Committee will conduct a formal inquiry into a petition. When this occurs, the Committee will table a report in the Legislative Council which may contain findings and recommendations for further action by the government.

It is not possible or practical for the Committee to undertake a formal inquiry into every petition it considers.

The Committee has inquired into petitions where it has identified a potential systemic issue of public concern that may be addressed through legislative action or other reform and is not being dealt with by another authority.

Factors that may influence action taken by the Committee

The Committee may decide to limit or conclude its enquiries into a petition if:

- there are other ways to address the issues in the petition which have not been pursued
- the matter has been or is being dealt with by the relevant authority. For example, planning or environmental matters have established decision making and appeal processes over which the Committee has minimal influence
- the issues raised in the petition will be, or have already recently been considered and/or debated by the Legislative Council
- the matter is the same or very similar to a petition or petitions the Committee has already considered
- the petition is the subject of a commercial dispute or legal action
- other reasons determined on a case-by-case basis.

What powers does the Committee have?

Often the Committee can obtain further information for the petitioner about the decision or policy they are questioning. In many cases it will publish the submissions and responses it has received on its website.

The Committee is not a decision-making body and only has the power to make recommendations for the government to consider. It does not have the power to direct, amend or overturn the decisions of other bodies. It cannot make binding decisions to resolve the matters or issues raised in your petition. Only the government has the power to change policy or take other action to resolve these matters.

A Petitioner's rights

A petitioner has a right to not be subjected to any harassment or interference as a result of their petition. Harassing or interfering with a petitioner may be a contempt of Parliament. Any person found guilty of a contempt may be subject to penalties. If you require more information on this matter, please contact the Committee.

Need more information?

Useful Links



Guide to Petitions:

https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/WebCMS/webcms.nsf/content/legislative_council-legislative-council-guide-to-petitions



Environment and Public Affairs Committee webpage:

<https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/commit.nsf/WCurrentNameNew/5A73802849C79D1E48257831003B03B2?OpenDocument#current>

Legislative Council Committee office



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