



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Making a Submission

Notes to help those intending to make a submission to a parliamentary committee inquiry

The following advice may assist you in making a submission to a parliamentary committee.

The main purpose of a parliamentary committee is to inquire into a topic relevant to its area of interest. Such inquiries usually result in a report to the Parliament. Most inquiries have terms of reference, which set out the matters to be considered by the committee. The terms of reference will be available on the committee's website.

As part of an inquiry, a committee seeks the views of those who may have an interest in the topic of the inquiry. A committee may do this in a number of ways such as through written submissions, online surveys and questionnaires, and subsequently through public hearings, including in the form of roundtables, workshops and community statement sessions. Most commonly, a committee asks for written submissions addressing an inquiry terms of reference and then proceeds to

public hearings. Requests for submissions may be advertised and are also published on the committee's website, as are closing dates for submissions and updates on the inquiry's progress. If you need more time to lodge a submission, contact the secretary of the relevant committee.

Information about current committee inquiries can be found at: www.aph.gov.au/house/committee

Who can make a submission?

Any individual or organisation can make a submission to a parliamentary committee.

What should be in a submission?

There is no set format for a submission to a parliamentary committee. Submissions may be in the form of a letter, a short document or a more substantial paper, or in audio visual format. They may include appendices and other supporting documents.

Submissions should be prepared solely for the inquiry and should not have been previously published. They should comment on at least one of the terms of reference. You may wish to include facts, opinions and arguments and recommendations for action.

Anyone preparing a detailed submission for the first time may find it useful to seek advice from the staff of the committee secretariat. Submissions which address the terms of reference directly, avoid unnecessary repetition and include recommendations that stand out clearly from the surrounding text are particularly appreciated. If your submission is long, it would be useful to include a brief summary of the main points.

During an inquiry, you can make further comments, in the form of a supplementary submission, to provide additional evidence or comment on other evidence obtained by the committee.

How to lodge a submission

Lodging a submission online is preferred. Online submissions can be lodged via a link on the inquiry home page. For first time submitters, this will require you to create a *My Parliament* account. This account can be used again for future submissions and also for tracking committees, inquiries and bills. You will need to provide your name and a valid email address to create a *My Parliament* account.

More information regarding online submissions can be found here: www.aph.gov.au/committee/submissions

Submissions can be uploaded in Microsoft Word®, Portable Document Format (PDF) or plain text format. You can upload multiple documents for a single inquiry, e.g. a covering letter, public submission and a confidential attachment can be uploaded at the same time.

An acknowledgement will be sent to your email address confirming receipt of your submission.

Submissions provided by email, post or fax can also be accepted. Individual committee addresses are available on the Australian Parliament's website.

Where possible, hard copy submissions should be typed. This helps with reproduction of the submission. If this is not possible, hand written submissions are acceptable, but care should be taken to ensure that they are legible and suitable for photocopying.

Regardless of how a submission is lodged, it must include the name(s), postal or email address(es), and contact telephone number(s) of the person(s) or organisation making the

submission. Contact details are not published but enable the committee to contact you if required. Submissions should be lodged by the advertised closing date. You can request an extension of time by contacting the committee secretariat, although an extension may not always be possible, particularly if the committee has to report in a short timeframe.

Things you need to know

Publication of submissions

Once a submission is received by a committee, you cannot publish or disclose it to any other person unless or until the committee has authorised its publication; nor can it be withdrawn or altered without the committee's permission. If you are not sure about the status of your submission, please check with the committee secretariat. If there are additional matters you wish to raise, this can be done in a supplementary submission.

Once the committee has received a submission it will decide whether to accept it as a submission and authorise its publication. For a range of reasons, the committee will reserve the right to not publish a submission, or any part of a submission, including those it judges do not address the inquiry's terms of reference.

You should be aware that submissions are part of a committee's public record and are usually published on the Parliament's website. To protect the privacy of submitters, the secretariat will remove signatures and personal contact details before publishing submissions. To assist us, we encourage you to include any personal information in a covering letter or through your *My Parliament* lodgement, **not** in the body of your submission.

If your submission includes matters of a private nature that could lead to the identification of individuals, you should contact the committee secretariat before lodging your submission.

Confidential submissions

While committees prefer that evidence be given in public whenever possible, you can request that all or part of your submission remain confidential. This should be indicated clearly on the front of the submission. When submitting, you should provide a reason for requesting confidentiality or anonymity, bearing in mind that, as stated above, contact details are generally removed from non-confidential submissions prior to publication.

You could also consider putting any confidential information in an appendix to the submission to allow the body of the submission to be published and publicly referred to by the committee. You should contact the committee secretariat in the first instance if you are considering lodging a submission that you would wish to remain confidential, either in whole or in part.

The committee will consider individual requests for confidentiality, but retains the authority to publish any submission. A committee may also decide not to authorise publication of a submission for a range of reasons, despite the author wishing it to be public.

Parliamentary privilege

The presentation or submission of a document to a committee is privileged under the *Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987*. This means that a person is immune from legal action in respect of lodging the submission or any statements contained in it. If a submission is authorised by a committee for publication, its distribution is also immune from legal action.

You are strongly encouraged to contact the committee secretariat to clarify the status of your submission if you wish to distribute it outside the committee, or if you have any queries about the application of parliamentary privilege.

Inquiry evidence

A parliamentary committee will base its findings on the written evidence it receives as well as oral evidence it takes at public hearings and in other forums. People or organisations making a submission may be asked to appear before the committee at a public hearing or a private (in camera) hearing.

Inquiry process at a glance

The inquiry process may vary from inquiry to inquiry, depending on the topic and timeframe, but usually consists of the following steps:

1. Reference received by the committee.
2. Reference notified through various media, and submissions invited from individuals and organisations.
3. Submissions received and authorised for publication.
4. Committee conducts on-site inspections, background briefing and seminars (where appropriate).
5. Committee conducts public hearings with selected individuals and organisations requested to give oral evidence.
6. Committee considers evidence and prepares report.
7. The report is presented to the Parliament and may be debated.
8. Copies of the report are made available through various means including publication on the Parliament's website and from national and state libraries.
9. Government considers report.
10. Government responds to report either by presenting a written response in the Parliament or, in the case of a bill inquiry, by discussing the report in parliamentary debate on the bill.

Submission checklist

Before lodging your submission you may find it helpful to consider the following checklist:

- Has my submission been written for the purposes of the inquiry?
- Have I checked that this is not material that has been published previously?
- Have I commented on some or all of the terms of reference?
- Have I provided a summary of the submission at the front and numbered the pages (for lengthy submissions)?
- Have I provided my return postal or email address and contact details with the submission?
- Have I ensured that my personal details are excluded from the body of the submission?
- If the submission contains confidential information, have I made this clear on the front of the submission and included reasons for requesting confidentiality?

Further information

Further information can be sought from the secretary of the committee conducting the particular inquiry or from the:

Office of the Clerk Assistant (Committees)

House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Tel: 02 6277 4397

Email: committee.reps@aph.gov.au

See also related pamphlets on parliamentary committees:

Appearing at a Public Hearing

Notes to help those [appearing as a witness at a parliamentary committee hearing](#).

Dealing with Parliamentary Committees

Notes to help those [dealing with parliamentary committees](#). This pamphlet also lists contact details for each committee secretariat.

Stay Informed

Keep up with the work of parliamentary committees on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and the [Media alert service](#). You can also use the Track Committee facility by creating a login account at www.aph.gov.au/MyParliament, and this will provide you with a personal My Parliament profile to track committees.