

7. Petitions

Individuals and organisations may seek to have petitions presented to Parliament that express views on matters of public policy and ask the Parliament to take a particular course of action.

Petitioning the Senate

To be accepted by the Senate, a petition must be:

- addressed to the Senate (rather than to the Government or a particular minister)
- presented by a senator; and
- certified by the Clerk as being in conformity with the standing orders; in particular, it must contain a request for action by the Senate or the Parliament.

Petitions must be presented by a senator

Only senators may present petitions, so a person wishing to petition the Senate must forward the petition to a senator and ask the senator to present it.

Before presenting a petition a senator must place their name on its front page, together with a statement of the total number of signatures.

Petitions must be lodged with the Clerk for presentation by delivering the petition to the Senate Table Office in SG.25. Petitions should be lodged with the Table Office by 5 pm for presentation the following sitting day. However, on Tuesdays, petitions will be accepted until 9 am that morning.

On each sitting day, at the time provided in the routine of business ([standing order 57](#)), the Clerk announces the presentation of petitions that have been lodged. After presentation, a copy of the petition is available on the Dynamic Red and in the *Hansard*.

Petitions must conform with the standing orders

Petitions must be certified by the Clerk as being in conformity with the standing orders before they can be presented. In summary:

- a petition must contain a request for action by the Senate or the Parliament—it should not merely express a point of view;
- a petition must be legible and must be in English or accompanied by a translation;
- all signatures must be original and must be written on a page bearing the full text of the petition— photocopies of signatures, for instance, cannot be accepted; and
- a petition must be respectful, decorous and temperate in its language—language considered unparliamentary in the Senate would be unacceptable in a petition.

The Senate standing orders make no special reference to online petitions; they apply to all petitions whether written on paper or available online. The Senate accepts petitions that have been published online and that have been ‘signed’ by a person submitting their name and email address. The email address of a signatory is taken to be the person’s signature for the purposes of the standing orders.

The relevant rules are contained in [standing orders 69 to 71](#). If there are any concerns about the conformity of a petition, the Table Office will provide relevant advice to the senator that intends to lodge it.

When is a petition not a petition?

Occasionally a document will be lodged as a petition which does not qualify as a petition under the standing orders.

The President may nonetheless approve the presentation of the document as a petition if the President is satisfied that exceptional circumstances warrant its presentation ([standing order 69\(8\)](#)).

A more common remedy is for a senator to seek the leave of the Senate to table the document (see [Guide No. 10](#)—Tabling of documents). As leave of the Senate can be refused by any single senator, it has become a practice for a copy of the document to be shown to all party Whips prior to the seeking of leave.

What happens to petitions?

Petitions presented to the Senate are brought to the notice of the appropriate Senate committee.

A committee may seek a reference from the Senate on the issues contained in a petition (see [Guide No. 13](#)—Referring matters to committees), or may use the petition as evidence in a related inquiry.

Need assistance?

Petitions may be lodged with the Senate Table Office in SG.25. Inquiries relating to the presentation of petitions should be directed to the Table Office by email (table.questions.sen@aph.gov.au) or on extension 3010. Further information is available [online](#), and information about petitions addressed to the House of Representatives can be found in House of Representatives [Infosheet No. 11](#).

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