



## **Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives**

*Te Tari o te Manahautū o te Whare Māngai*

24 July 2017

Mr Ross Vasta MP

Chairperson

Standing Committee on Petitions

Email: [petitions.committee.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:petitions.committee.reps@aph.gov.au)

Dear Mr Vasta

### **Submission—Inquiry into E-Petitions**

Thank you for your letter dated 21 June enclosing your terms of reference and I welcome the opportunity to comment on the committee's inquiry into e-petitions. As New Zealand does not yet have an e-petitions system the focus of my submission will be on the features of the system which my office will make available to the public from the end of 2017.

The existing process for petitioning the New Zealand House of Representatives is completely paper based. It is governed by Standing Orders 361 – 371 which can be found [here](#). To date, during the present 51<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 136 petitions have been presented for consideration.

The lack of an e-petitions system has posed a considerable hurdle for petitioners, and in fact petitioners have been using websites such as Change.org and the New Zealand based ActionStation.org.nz to gather signatures on petitions they intend to present to the House for consideration. The existing process is, therefore, clearly not meeting the public's expectation of how they wish to engage with Parliament.

During 2016/17 my office undertook a process to examine existing e-petitions systems in Australia and the UK, and to design a system for implementation in New Zealand. The system we will implement this year has many features that will be familiar to the committee;

- Petitioners will be able to propose petition wording, using a standard template that accords with the Standing Orders, and have wording checked by my office electronically.
- Once approved petitions will be published to the Parliament website and will be available for members of the public to sign to show their support.
- Petitions will be able to be shared via social media.
- The time frame for collecting signatures will close on a date selected by the petitioner who will be alerted via email that their petition has closed and they must find an MP to present their petition to the House.
- Once presented petitions will be allocated to a subject select committee for consideration and report to the House, as they are now. New Zealand does not have a dedicated petitions committee.

During its review of the Standing Orders in 2014<sup>1</sup> the Standing Orders Committee stated “*We understand that the immediacy of social media campaigns and petitions can have a powerful impact on policy debates*”. Providing an e-petitions system to the public is a key initiative for my office that will contribute to engaging more New Zealanders with Parliament every year.

Once again thank you for your letter and receiving this submission. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Yours sincerely



David Wilson  
**Clerk of the House of Representatives**

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<sup>1</sup> Standing Orders Committee, [Review of Standing Orders 2014 \(I.18A\)](#), 21 July 2014