



Ms Renee Toy
Inquiry Secretary
House Standing Committee on Petitions
Department of the House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Toy

Thank you for the opportunity to take part in your inquiry. I trust the information below is of assistance to you.

The ACT Legislative Assembly has had an e-petitions system since 2013. The system was designed to operate as closely as possible as paper petitions, the chief difference being the involvement of a Member at the beginning of the process, rather than at the end.

In short, e-petitions are initiated in the following manner:

- A person ("Principal petitioner") wishing to initiate an e-petition completes an application form detailing his/her contact details and the proposed terms (there is a 250 word limit).
- The Principal petitioner then approaches an MLA willing to sponsor the e-petition.
- The MLA approaches the Clerk's office with the proposed details of the e-petition. Some refinement of the terms of the petition may happen at this stage to ensure the e-petition is in order.
- Once certified as being in order, the e-petition is reproduced as a current e-petition on the Assembly's website (<https://epetitions.act.gov.au>).
- ACT residents may add their names to the petition. Personal details are not viewable to others, only the cumulative total of petitioners joining the petition.
- There is a link for petitioners to forward the e-petition to others who may be interested in signing.
- The petition remains open for residents to join for the posting period stipulated by the Principal petitioner and MLA (minimum 1 week, maximum 6 months).
- At the conclusion of the posting period, a copy of the e-petition is run-off, including details of all those who have signed.

From this point on, e-petitions follow the same process as that for paper petitions, viz:

- The petition is presented to the Assembly at its next sitting, with the terms of the petition announced by the Clerk.
- A copy of the petition is referred to the appropriate Minister, for a response within 3 months.
- If the petition has received 500 or more signatories, it is referred to an appropriate Assembly committee "for consideration".
- Ministerial responses are similarly announced by the Clerk, and are viewable on the petitions website.

While in the early years e-petitions were not greatly used (and it may be said, neither were paper petitions), the Assembly has witnessed a resurgence in interest in petitions in the present 9th Assembly, roughly doubling in number, and about a third of which are e-petitions.

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The Deputy Clerk and Serjeant-at-Arms will happily assist with any aspect you may like to discuss further. He can be contacted on _____ or via email at _____

Yours sincerely

Tom Duncan

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

28 September 2017