



**Office of the
Legislative Assembly**

Office of the Clerk

Ms Jodie Belyea MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Belyea

Inquiry into the standing orders relating to petitions

I refer to your committee's letter to me dated 26 November 2025 seeking a submission to your inquiry into the standing orders relating to petitions.

Detailed below is an outline of how the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory operate in relation to petitions and my comments on your inquiry's terms of reference.

ACT Legislative Assembly's practice and standing orders in relation to petitions

The Legislative Assembly's standing orders were adopted in 1989 and were based on the standing orders of the House of Representatives at that time. The standing orders relating to petitions have been amended on 8 occasions with changes principally relating to modernising language, updating practice and incorporating the lodging and consideration of e-petitions.

The most recent changes have been to maintain the confidentiality of signatories to both paper and e-petitions to exempt them from automatic publication, and to provide a mechanism for Members to speak to petitions and government responses, particularly those Members who had sponsored petitions. The Speaker, from the Chair, proposes the question—That the petitions and responses so lodged be noted. 30 minutes is allocated to the debate, each member having a time limit of five minutes. It is usual to have a Member speak about a petition lodged on most sitting days.

Petitions lodged with over 500 signatures are automatically referred to the relevant standing committee. Each committee determines whether it will inquire into a petition.

All petitions, even those with just one signature, require a government response within three months of tabling.

In 2025, of the 39 sitting days, petitions were presented and debated on 28 days (72 percent).

The number of petitions in the last Assembly is shown in the table below:

Number of Petitions presented in the Tenth Assembly, 2020-2024				
	2020-2021	2022	2023	2024
Presented	48	42	33	47
Referred to Committee	33	25	9	13
Inquiries	1	5	1	1
Over 500 signatures	26	25	11	8

Comments against the terms of reference

(a) the suitability of the current provisions of the standing orders governing the form, submission, and consideration of petitions and e-petitions

The committee may be interested in the Assembly's standing orders 83A to 97 (see attached) that govern the form of petitions which apply to both paper and electronic petitions. Consideration of petitions is governed by standing orders 98A, 99, 99A, 99B and 100.

(b) the impact of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and automated systems, on the integrity and authenticity of the petitions process

The Assembly does not accept e-petitions from any other source other than those lodged through the Assembly website. Members are permitted to table petitions from other sources however they are deemed to be out of order and have no status other than a tabled paper and are not authorised for publication.

The Office continues to monitor developments in other parliaments.

(c) potential amendments to the standing orders or administrative practices to ensure the petitions process remains accessible, credible, and sustainable

The Committee may wish to consider amending standing orders to enable Members to highlight petitions lodged in debates in the Chamber or by implementing a threshold that automatically refers a petition to the relevant committee for its consideration. Anecdotal evidence suggests that those signing petitions consider that their petitions are being taken seriously when they are raised during debate in the Chamber or by being made the subject of a committee inquiry with a subsequent report with recommendations. The committee may also consider whether Ministers respond to all petitions and not just ones that may be referred by the committee.

(d) any other related matters the Committee considers relevant

The ACT Legislative Assembly accepts petitions from all residents including those under 18. The Assembly is mindful of only accepting petitions which come under the responsibilities of the Territory and ministerial responsibilities.

I trust this is useful for the committee's inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Tom Duncan.

Tom Duncan
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

5 February 2026

Attachment - Extract from Standing Orders as at 2 September 2025

Petitions to be lodged with Clerk and to bear certification

83. Every petition shall be lodged with the Clerk by 5 pm on the day previous to the meeting of the Assembly at which it is proposed that it be presented; when presented the petition must bear a signature by the Clerk or the Deputy Clerk, to certify that it conforms with the standing orders. *(Amended 31 August 2023)*

Petitions which do not conform with the Standing Orders

- 83A. Petitions which do not conform with the standing orders, as determined by the Clerk, may be presented, by leave, by a Member in the 30-minute debate on the motion that petitions and responses so lodged be noted. The Member must indicate the intention to table an out-of-order petition to the Clerk by 5 pm on the day previous to the meeting of the Assembly at which it is proposed that the out-of-order petition is to be presented, and provide the subject matter and the number of signatories. *(Adopted 4 May 1995. Amended 6 March 2008 and 31 August 2023)*

Time for presenting certain petitions

84. A petition referring to a motion or an order of the day may be presented when such motion or order of the day is called on. A petition presented in this manner must contain the signature of the Clerk or Deputy Clerk that it is in order. *(Amended 6 March 2008 and 2 September 2025)*

To be addressed to the Assembly and legible

85. Every petition shall be addressed to the Assembly, shall refer to a matter within the power of the Assembly, shall request action by the Assembly, and shall be fairly written, typewritten, printed or reproduced by mechanical process, without insertions or deletions. *(Amended 6 March 2008, 29 November 2018 and 31 August 2023)*

To be from residents/citizens of the Australian Capital Territory

86. Petitions must only contain signatures of residents/citizens of the Australian Capital Territory. *(Amended 6 March 2008)*

To be in English or accompanied by translation

87. Every petition shall be in the English language or be accompanied by a translation certified to be correct. A person certifying a translation to be correct shall affix their name and address to the translation. *(Amended 31 August 2023)*

To be signed on the same sheet

88. Every petition shall contain the signature and address of at least one person on the sheet on which the petition is inscribed.

To be signed by persons themselves

89. Each signature must be made by the person signing in their own handwriting: provided that persons unable to write shall affix their marks in the presence of a witness, who shall, as such, also affix their signature and address, and the address of the petitioner. *(Amended 6 March 2008 and 31 August 2023)*

Signatures not to be transferred

90. Every signature must be written on a page bearing the terms of the petition, or the action asked for by the petition. Signatures must not be copied, pasted or transferred on to the petition or placed on a blank page on the reverse of a sheet containing the terms of the petition. *(Amended 6 March 2008)*

To be received only as from persons signing

91. All petitions shall be received only as the petitions of the parties signing the same.

From corporations

92. Corporations may make a petition by executing the documents by any method that would be lawful for the purposes of the execution of a deed. *(Amended 6 March 2008 and 31 August 2023)*

Documents not to be attached

93. Letters, affidavits, or other documents, may not be attached to a petition.

Must be respectful and within ministerial responsibility

94. Every petition shall be respectful, decorous and temperate in its language, and shall not contain irrelevant statements. If, in the opinion of the Speaker, the subject matter is not within the ministerial responsibility of the Territory or is critical of the character or conduct of a person, contains unbecoming expressions, is not respectful, decorous or temperate in its language or offends any standing order other than those relating to petitions, the paper shall be returned to the Member who lodged it. *(Amended 6 March 2008 and 29 November 2018)*

Must be lodged by a Member

95. Petitions for presentation to the Assembly can be lodged with the Clerk only by Members, but Members cannot lodge petitions from themselves. *(Amended 6 March 2008, 29 March 2012 and 31 August 2023)*

Members to sign and indicate number of petitioners

96. Every Member lodging a petition with the Clerk for presentation to the Assembly shall sign the beginning of that petition and indicate the number of eligible petitioners. *(Amended 6 March 2008)*

Standing orders to be observed

97. Every Member lodging a petition shall take care that the petition conforms to these standing orders. *(Amended 6 March 2008)*

Clerk to announce particulars of petitions lodged

98. The Clerk shall make an announcement as to the petitions lodged for presentation to the Assembly, indicating in the case of each petition the Member who lodged it, the identity and number of the eligible petitioners and the subject matter of the petition, and any Ministerial responses to petitions previously presented. *(Amended 6 March 2008 and 29 November 2018)*

Motion to note petitions and responses

- 98A. Following the Clerk's announcement of petitions and petition responses, the Speaker shall propose the question—That the petitions and responses so lodged be noted. The time allocated for the debate shall be 30 minutes with each Member speaking for not more than 5 minutes. A Member may, by leave, table out-of-order petitions during the debate on the motion to note petitions and responses. *(Inserted 29 November 2018 and 31 August 2023)*

Confidentiality of personal information

- 98B. The terms of petitions (grievance and request) are available in the *Hansard* and online. The personal information of signatories to any petition (paper, e-petition and out-of-order) remains confidential. *(Inserted 2 September 2025)*

Question on presentation

99. Upon the presentation of a petition to the Assembly, or on that sitting day, a Member may move without notice that a particular petition be referred to a committee. *(Amended 6 March 2008 and 31 August 2023)*

Referred to committee

- 99A. Petitions and/or e-petitions in similar terms with at least 500 signatories in total from residents/citizens of the Australian Capital Territory presented to the Assembly on the same day shall be referred to the relevant Assembly standing committee for consideration. In the event that the subject matter of the petition makes it unclear which committee it should be referred to, the Speaker will determine the appropriate committee. *(Adopted 19 November 2015. Amended 29 November 2018 and 22 August 2019)*

Advice on decision to inquire

- 99B. The relevant Assembly Standing Committee should provide advice on their decision to inquire, or not, into a petition to the Speaker within 28 days of the Minister's response to the petition being tabled in the Assembly. When the Committee's response is received by the Speaker, the Speaker shall circulate to all Members. *(Inserted 31 August 2023 and amended 2 September 2025)*

Referred to Ministers – Minister’s response

100. A copy of every petition and/or e-petition lodged with the Clerk and received by the Assembly shall be referred by the Clerk to the Minister responsible for the administration of the matter which is the subject of the petition. A Minister must respond to that petition within 3 months of the tabling of the petition by lodging a response with the Clerk for presentation to the Assembly, such response being announced at the end of the petitions announcement. When the Minister’s response is received by the Clerk, the Clerk shall circulate to all Members, and the response is deemed to be authorised for publication.
(Amended 6 March 2008, 29 November 2018 and 31 August 2023)

Electronic petitions (“e-petitions”)

- 100A. (a) An e-petition is a petition:
- (i) in the correct form, stating a grievance and containing a request for action by the Assembly;
 - (ii) sponsored by a Member and lodged with the Clerk for publication on the Assembly’s website for a nominated period (“posted period”); and
 - (iii) in which persons elect to indicate their support (“join the petition”) by electronically providing their name, address (including postcode), email address and signifying their intention to join the petition.
- (b) The posted period for an e-petition is to be a minimum of one week and a maximum of six months from the date of publication on the Assembly’s website.
- (c) *(Omitted 31 August 2023)*
- (d) *(Omitted 31 August 2023)*
- (e) Only one e-petition dealing with substantially the same grievance and requesting substantially the same action by the Assembly shall be published on the Assembly’s website at the same time.
- (f) Once the posted period for an e-petition has elapsed, a paper copy of the petition shall be printed by the Clerk in full (including the details of the persons who joined the petition) and presented to the Assembly.
- (g) An e-petition published on the Assembly’s website, but not presented to the Assembly prior to the expiration of an Assembly, may be presented to the subsequent Assembly to become a petition of the subsequent Assembly.
- (h) An e-petition cannot be sponsored after the expiration of an Assembly and until the new Assembly has met and Members sworn.

- (i) Persons may join an e-petition themselves and not on behalf of others, except in the case of a person who is not able to join due to an incapacity, in which case, with the agreement of that person, another person may join on behalf of that person.
- (j) A person cannot sign or join the same e-petition more than once. *(Adopted 29 March 2012. Amended 29 November 2018)*

[Duties and powers of the Clerk and Speaker regarding e-petitions](#)

- 100B. (a) The Clerk may decline to publish an e-petition on the Assembly's website not in conformity with these standing orders and advise the sponsoring Member accordingly.
- (b) The Clerk or a Member may seek a ruling from the Speaker about the conformity of any petition with these standing orders.
- (c) The Clerk is authorised to create and maintain an appropriate website on which to publish electronic petitions, responses to petitions and explanatory information and do all things necessary in order to give effect to these standing orders.