



PETITIONS COMMITTEE KOMITI WHIRIWHIRI TAKE PETIHANA

20 February 2026

Jodie Belyea MP, Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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By email: petitions.committee.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Belyea

Submission on the Inquiry into the Standing Orders relating to petitions

The Petitions Committee of the New Zealand Parliament welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Inquiry into the Standing Orders relating to petitions.

We acknowledge the terms of reference of the inquiry. This submission will provide an overview of the petition process of the New Zealand Parliament. We hope that the information provided in this submission will be of use to the committee.

Petitioning the House of Representatives in New Zealand

This section of our submission will discuss the ways in which the New Zealand Parliament receives and considers petitions. This process is governed by the [Standing Orders of the House of Representatives](#).

Further information on this process can be found in Chapter 49 of [Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand](#).

Form of petition

Petitions must be addressed to the House of Representatives, and request that the House take some action in respect of the subject matter of the petition ([Standing Order 369](#)). While some petitions ask for redress of private grievances, most relate to matters of public policy.

A petition may be made on paper, or submitted as an electronic petition via the Parliament website. Petitions may be submitted in the name of an individual or an organisation. There is no requirement that the petitioner or signatories be citizens or residents of New Zealand. A

member of Parliament can create or sign a petition, but must find another member to present it to the House.

There are several restrictions on the content of petitions, set out in [Standing Order 372](#) and [Standing Order 373](#). A petition must:

- be respectful, moderate in its language, and of serious intent
- be succinct and free of material that is irrelevant or extraneous
- not include statements that are unable to be authenticated
- not relate to a matter that is currently before a court or tribunal
- not relate to a matter that is suppressed by a court
- not be within the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman, unless the Ombudsman has made a final determination about the matter
- not be substantially the same as an earlier petition that has been reported to the House or referred to a Minister during the current term of Parliament.

Electronic petitions are reviewed by staff at the Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives, to ensure that they comply with the rules of the House before they open for signatures. Where a petition is out of order, staff assist petitioners to make any required changes. Staff also recommend changes to the wording of petitions to help petitioners make their requests clear and easy to understand. Petitions that cannot be brought in order are rejected.

Presentation of petitions

Before a petition can be considered, it must be presented to the House. A petition can only be presented by a member of Parliament. The process for presentation of petitions is set out in [Standing Order 377](#). In the case of a paper petition, the member must sign the cover sheet of the petition and deliver it to the Clerk of the House. In the case of an electronic petition, the member must inform the Clerk in writing that they wish to present the petition. If the petition is in order, it is then presented to the House. The Clerk announces the presentation of the petition at the start of the next sitting day.

All petitions are immediately referred to the Petitions Committee for consideration, except for petitions that relate to New Zealand's intelligence and security agencies. Those petitions are referred to the Intelligence and Security Committee.

Petitions Committee

The Petitions Committee is a specialist select committee of the House of Representatives, and is the first point of consideration for petitions presented to the House. Prior to the establishment of the committee, all petitions presented to the House were referred to the select committee whose subject area most closely related to the matters raised in the petition. Under that system, the volume of petitions being received made it difficult for committees to give petitions the consideration they deserved and affected committees'

capacity for other business. Petitions were often not dealt with in a timely or consistent fashion.¹

The way the Petitions Committee operates reflects its important role in considering matters brought to the attention of the House by New Zealanders. It is expected to operate in a non-partisan manner, and is chaired by one of the House's presiding officers. The committee usually has an even split of members from government and opposition parties. We currently have two members from a government party, and two members from opposition parties. Our membership arrangements assist us in finding common ground independently of the government of the day.

Once a petition is referred to the Petitions Committee, it usually invites the petitioner to make a written submission, outlining in greater detail the reasons for the petition. The committee will then consider its next steps. It may:

- refer the petition to a Minister for response
- transfer the petition to a subject select committee for further consideration
- retain the petition for consideration.

In the current Parliament, only 58 petitions have been referred to Ministers, whereas most petitions have been considered and reported on by select committees (116 by the Petitions Committee and 63 by other committees). The Petitions Committee will often transfer a petition to another committee if it involves complex policy issues or requires specialist expertise.

Consideration of petitions by committees

If the petition is considered by the Petitions Committee (or another committee), the committee will consider what evidence it may require. It may invite individuals or entities that have an interest in the petition to provide written evidence in respect of the petition. Typically, the committee will invite a submission from the government department responsible for the public policy area the petition relates to.

The committee frequently holds public hearings of evidence with petitioners and others who have provided evidence on petitions. These hearings are broadcast live on the internet and recorded. To ensure this process is accessible to people in all parts of New Zealand, petitioners and submitters can participate remotely via videoconference. The committee uses this opportunity to discuss the substance of the petition with the petitioner and other interested parties.²

¹ Standing Orders Committee, [Review of Standing Orders 2020](#).

² Recordings of the Petitions Committee's hearings can be found [here](#).

After the committee has considered the evidence provided in the written submissions and public hearings, the committee will present a report to the House summarising the evidence presented to it, as well as the committee's view on the petition.³

If, during its consideration, the committee identifies any action that it thinks the Government should take, the committee can include recommendations to the Government in its report. Within 60 working days, the Government must present a paper to the House responding to the committee's recommendations.

Referral of petitions to Ministers

In some cases, the Petitions Committee will refer petitions directly to a Minister for response, under [Standing Order 380](#). Within 60 working days, the Minister must present a paper to the House responding to the petition.

There is no minimum number of signatures required for a petition to be referred to a Minister. Instead, the committee considers if the issues raised by the petition are best addressed by the relevant Minister, rather than being considered by a select committee. Examples of circumstances where a referral might be warranted include a petition that is highly specific to the individual petitioner's circumstances or where a Minister is a direct decision-maker on the issue.

We find it valuable that the New Zealand House of Representatives, through its committees, can consider petitions independently of the Government. We consider that Ministers are not always best placed to answer petitions that relate to general questions of public policy, as they are unlikely to reach a view that differs from the general position of the government of the day. We think that committee consideration and evidence gathering can lead to better outcomes for petitioners and highlight meaningful opportunities for change. For that reason, we aim to send only a small number of petitions to Ministers for response.

Following up on responses from Government

When the Government responds to a committee's recommendation, or a Minister responds to a petition directly, the response is presented to the House. The response is also tabled for the committee's consideration. When the Government or a Minister commits to a certain course of action, the committee aims to follow up at a later date to ensure that the commitment is followed through. We recently presented a report to the House showing some of the work that our committee has been doing to follow up on recommendations.⁴

³ Reports on petitions can be found [here](#).

⁴ Petitions Committee, [Briefing on Government responses to committee recommendations](#), 2025.

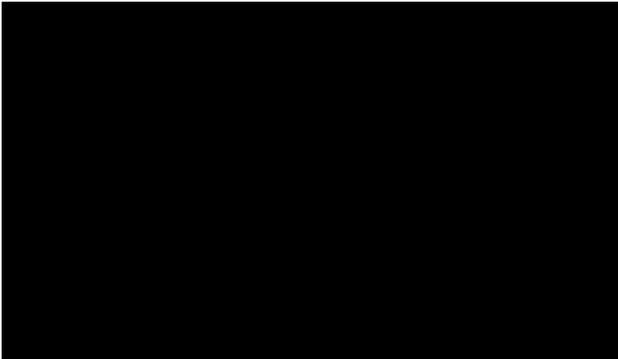
Conclusion

We believe that the establishment of the Petitions Committee has made a huge difference to the New Zealand Parliament's ability to consider an increasing volume of petitions. We are confident that our process allows petitioners to feel heard, and provides them with assurance that Parliament is giving careful consideration to the issues that matter to them.

We are appreciative that our Standing Orders allow committees to give substantive consideration to issues raised in petitions. We also appreciate the opportunity to share our enthusiasm for our process with you, and we are happy to provide further assistance to the committee as it progresses with its inquiry.

If you have any questions about this submission, please contact the clerk of the committee, , at petitions@parliament.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



Greg O'Connor
Chairperson
Petitions Committee