

Philip S. Clark

4 July 2017

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir or Madam,
My submission for your Inquiry is included below. I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the successful work of your Committee.
Regards,
Philip Clark

Starting an e-petition

Each petition should start with a heading that succinctly identifies the issue of concern
Each petition should identify the social, geographical and/or political area or scope it purports to address
Each e-petition should be assigned a unique URL address
All e-petition headings should be listed in an easily-accessible table from which individual e-petitions are hyperlinked
To assist public access to petitions, there should be regularly-timed advertising in mainstream newspapers
Encourage inclusion of a brief prospective cost-benefit estimate including who might benefit, who pays the costs

Who can sign?

The present e-petition signing access policy is restricted to one signature per email address.
This policy discriminates against citizens who don't have an email address, computer or smart phone but might wish to support a particular petition
It is therefore recommended that an alternative route for signing e-petitions should be available
To ensure that signatories are eligible Australian citizens, the electoral rolls should be used to confirm eligibility
There is a perceived need to include rather than exclude the many citizens such as couples, older families and people living in aged accommodation who share an email address when individuals and groups with multiple email addresses can provide multiple signatures
Elimination of duplicate signatories via check of electoral rolls

Government response

While some overseas jurisdictions apply minimum numbers of signatories for mandatory responses, there could be an important issue raised by only a small number of e.g. rural people which deserves further consideration.
Proposed that all petitions should get an acknowledgement response from the secretariat, with 50 for rural and 100 for urban to get a response from the Petitions Committee Chair. While I recognise that the Chair's response would probably be written by the bureaucracy anyway, it is perceived as relevant for the Committee Chair to read and sign the response.
The final step would require at least 500 (rural) and 1500 (urban) signatories to be considered by the Parliament.