

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to make a submission into the enquiry into the e-petitioning system of the House of Representatives Petitions Committee. I do not wish my personal details to be published online, only the content of my submission.

I note in the terms of reference, you are looking at "The extent to which the e-petitions system has met the expectations of Parliamentarians and members of the public".

As a member of the public, I find that it does not meet my needs whatsoever. It also does not set a legal precedent for States and Local Councils to meet my needs either.

It is our democratic right in Australia to have our joint voices heard by Government at all levels via petitions. If Government are serious about enabling communication with the public, it needs to provide a simple, low tech manner in which to do this, electronically. Some Local Councils such as my own currently do not accept electronic petitions at all, which seems to me (and many others) to be an veiled attempt to shut down the voices of the people asking for change, transparency and fairness.

In 2017, other countries such as the US and the UK accept electronic petitions. Australians have embraced online shopping, internet banking, e-Tax. Agencies such as Centrelink communicate electronically with citizens. State and Local Councils utilise websites, Facebook and email to communicate with constituents. In 2017 it is an unmet expectation to be able to sign electronic petitions and feel our voices are heard.

I am convinced that NOT being heard is the reason we are currently experiencing so many surprising election results, not only in Australia, but right around the world.

I ask that this committee recommend that all levels of Government in Australia utilise the Electronic Transactions Act 2000 and encourage citizens to submit electronic petitions in order to meet the expectations of the public.

As for future enhancements, perhaps the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) can establish a trial electronic petition system, as a pre-cursor to online voting, which already has great support in this country. This would be a true reflection of genuine Australian Citizens and could not be hijacked by international interests. Any issues through an AEC driven petitions system could be ironed out and give the Australian Public confidence in future online elections.