



**THE HON CHRISTOPHER PYNE MP
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
LEADER OF THE HOUSE**

Dr Dennis Jensen MP
Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr ^{Dennis,}Jensen

I write with regard to the Government's response to the report by the Standing Committee on Petitions titled: *Inquiry into Electronic Petitioning to the House of Representatives*.

I thank the Committee for its work on this inquiry.

The Government's response is attached for the information of you and the Committee, and will be tabled in the House in due course.

Yours sincerely


Christopher Pyne MP

1.0 FEB 2015



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions
report:

Inquiry into Electronic Petitioning to the House of
Representatives

February 2015

Response from the Government to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions report *Inquiry into Electronic petitioning to the House of Representatives*

Opening Statement

The Government thanks the Committee for its work in examining the potential for the introduction of an electronic petitioning system for the House of Representatives.

The Government's response to the recommendations is as follows:

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the House:

(a) establish an electronic petitions website and system under the administration of the House; and

(b) make necessary arrangements with the Queensland Parliament to enable the use of software supporting that Parliament's electronic petitions system.

Response

The Government supports the recommendation in principle, but notes that there may be resource implications. The Government requests that the Speaker and the Department of the House of Representatives work towards implementation of electronic petitioning within the constraints of current resources.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that, at present, no discussion forum be provided but that in the 43rd Parliament, the Committee review this recommendation and report to the House.

Response

The Government does not support the creating of a discussion forum at this time.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Standing Orders of the House be amended to make specific provision to accept electronic petitions. Accordingly, standing orders:

(a) 204 (b), (e) and (f), relating to the form of petitions;

(b) 205 (a) and (b), relating to signatures; and

(c) 206 (a), relating to lodging a petition for presentation;

be amended to take account of the electronic format.

Response

The Government supports this recommendation.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that duplicate electronic petitions be treated as instances of the same petitions, as is the case for paper petitions, such that duplicates are not displayed on the House of Representatives electronic petitions website.

Response

The Government supports this recommendation.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that signatories to petitions be required to provide an address and postcode in addition to name and signature and that, as for paper petitions, neither addresses nor postcodes of signatories, or the principal petitioner, be published by the Committee.

Response

The Government supports this recommendation.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that electronic petitions be printed prior to presentation so that a hard copy is presented to the House.

Response

The Government supports this recommendation.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that electronic petitions be forwarded to the Committee for review and certification before being posted on the Committee's electronic petitions website.

Response

The Government supports this recommendation.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the personal particulars of petitioners included on original petitions be available for inspection in the Table Office, as printouts only, as is currently the case for paper petitions.

Response

The Government supports this recommendation, noting that currently the Standing Orders only require the signature of petitioners except for the principal petitioner, for whom the name and address is also required. It would be desirable to investigate the exclusion of address details for all bar the principal petitioner from the hard copy print out.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that:

(a) electronic copies or lists of petitioners' personal details derived from electronic petitions be deleted six months after the close of the petition; and

(b) petitions be posted on the Committee's website for the life of the Parliament and then removed.

Response

The Government supports this recommendation.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the electronic petitions system use verification methods currently employed in the Queensland Parliament's electronic petitions system, and that improved methods of verification be adopted as they become available.

Response

The Government supports this recommendation.