



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS**

*Chair: Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Deputy Chair: Mr Russell Broadbent MP*

Petitions Committee recommends the House of Representatives to accept electronic petitions

On Monday the House of Representatives Petitions Committee released a report calling on the House of Representatives to accept electronic petitions.

The Committee found that the Australian public would have better access to parliament if the House of Representatives accepts electronic petitions.

The recommendations of the report include that:

- the House of Representatives establish an electronic management system and website to manage and publish electronic petitions;
- change Standing Orders to allow electronic petitions;
- petitioners be required to provide address and post-code as well as name and signature; and that
- all personal details held in electronic form be deleted six months after an electronic petition is closed.

The Committee Chair Julia Irwin said that, under the reforms recommended by the Committee, both paper and electronic petitions would be received, and would be treated the same way as far as possible.

“The main difference would be that electronic petitions would be reviewed by the Committee before being posted on the website for signatures, whereas paper petitions will be considered, as now, by the Committee before being presented to the House,” Mrs Irwin said.

Mrs Irwin said that the key question posed by the inquiry was whether electronic petitions could be a way to “engage a greater number of Australians in the working of their Parliament”. She said the inquiry’s findings clearly showed that electronic petitions to the House would indeed be “a sounding board for the Australian people, giving individuals and groups direct access to their Parliament”.

“The Committee had received evidence that the House should accept electronic petitions due to the widespread adoption of electronic communications,” she said. “If it did not, the House of Representatives could be at risk of falling out-of-step with the community.”

Mrs Irwin also highlighted the Committee’s determination to ensure the privacy of members of the public in petitioning the House of Representatives, saying that this was critical in establishing an enhanced relationship between Parliament and the Australian public.

For media comment please contact the Committee Chair, Julia Irwin, on (02) 6277 4300 (Parliament House); or (02) 9755 7911 (Electorate Office).

For background information please contact the Committee secretariat:

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Website: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/petitions/index.htm>
