



# Petitions under review

Have you ever organised or signed a petition? If so, the House of Representatives Procedure Committee would like to hear from you. The Committee is conducting an inquiry into all aspects of the petitioning process and would like to hear from the public on how they found the process.

“Petitions have a long history and are one of the ways that various groups in the community can directly advise the parliament what they think about an issue,” Chair of the Committee Margaret May said.

“We want to make sure that we have the best system possible in place so that the public feel their views are heard,” she said.

“Are the rules about form and content appropriate, should people be able to sign petitions electronically, and most importantly, are petitions an effective way of influencing the parliament or just a waste of time?”

Mrs May said several members of the Committee had visited the Scottish Parliament recently and were very impressed with their petitioning process.

“We can learn a lot from other parliaments,” she said.

“While we might not take on board everything they are doing, it showed us a model where there was a real examination of the issues raised in the petition, involvement by the Parliament, government and community in examining the subject, and at the end of the day, some concrete results to show. We certainly would like to see our petitioning process reinvigorated.”

The terms of reference for the inquiry are very broad, and the Committee welcomes submissions addressing the following areas in particular:

- Are the current rules about what is a petition too restrictive?
- Should the rules governing form and content of petitions be changed?
- How should petitions be able to be presented to the Parliament?
- Should petitions be examined by the Parliament rather than simply referred to the relevant minister?
- How effective are petitions?
- Should there be a formal response required from the Government to petitions and what form should that take?

Submissions can be made either by mail or email, and should reach the Committee no later than **27 October 2006**.

**For media comment:** House Procedure Committee Chair, Margaret May, ph (07)5525 0688

**For background information:** please contact the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4670 or visit the inquiry website at:

[www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/proc/petitioning/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/proc/petitioning/index.htm)