

The committee will consider individual requests for confidentiality, but retains the authority to publish any submission. A committee may also decide not to authorise publication of a submission for a range of reasons, despite the author wishing it to be public.

Parliamentary privilege

The presentation or submission of a document to a committee is privileged. Essentially this means that a person is immune from legal action in respect of lodging the submission or any statements contained in it. If a submission is authorised for publication, its distribution is also immune from legal action.

Inquiry evidence

A parliamentary committee will base its findings on the written submissions it receives as well as oral evidence it takes at public hearings. People or organisations making a submission may be asked to appear before the committee at a public hearing or a closed (*in camera*) hearing (see also the pamphlet *Appearing at a Public Hearing*).

Inquiry process at a glance

The inquiry process may vary from inquiry to inquiry, depending on the topic and timeframe, but usually consists of the following steps:

1. Reference received by the committee.
2. Reference advertised through various media, and submissions invited from individuals and organisations.
3. Submissions received and authorised for publication.
4. Committee conducts on-site inspections, background briefing and seminars (where appropriate).
5. Committee conducts public hearings with selected individuals and organisations requested to give oral evidence.
6. Committee considers evidence and prepares report.

7. The report is presented to the Parliament and may be debated.
8. Copies of the report are made available through various means including through the national and state libraries and publication on the Parliament's website.
9. Government considers report.
10. Government responds to report either by presenting a written response in the Parliament or, in the case of a bill inquiry, by discussing the report in parliamentary debate on the bill.

Submission checklist

Before lodging your submission you may find it helpful to consider the following checklist:

- Have I commented on some or all of the terms of reference?
- Have I provided a summary of the submission at the front (for lengthy submissions)?
- Have I provided my return address and contact details with the submission?
- If the submission contains confidential information, have I made this clear at the front?
- Have I provided an electronic version of the submission (if possible)?

Further information can be sought from the secretary of the committee conducting the particular inquiry or from:

Office of the Clerk Assistant (Committees)

House of Representatives

PO Box 6021

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

Tel: 02 6277 4397

Fax: 02 6277 4034

Email: committee.reps@aph.gov.au



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Making a Submission

Notes to help those intending to make a submission to a parliamentary committee inquiry



Photo of Parliament House, Australia, courtesy of Thinkstock

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Department of the House of Representatives
COMMITTEE OFFICE



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COMMONWEALTH of AUSTRALIA

The following advice may assist you in making a submission to a parliamentary committee.

The main purpose of a parliamentary committee is to carry out an examination of a particular matter and report the findings of those investigations to the Parliament. Each inquiry has terms of reference, which set out the matters to be considered by the committee.

As part of the inquiry process, a committee asks for written submissions addressing the terms of reference. Please check if the committee has set a date for submissions to be made -- if you need more time, please contact the relevant committee secretary.

Information about current committee inquiries can be found at:
www.aph.gov.au/house/committee

Who can make a submission?

Any individual or organisation can make a submission to a parliamentary committee.

What should be in a submission?

There is no set form for a submission to a parliamentary committee. Submissions may be in the form of a letter, a short document or a more substantial paper. They may include appendices and other supporting documents.

Submissions should be prepared solely for the inquiry and should comment on at least one of the terms of reference. You may wish to include facts, opinions and arguments and recommendations for action.

If your submission is long, it would be useful to include a brief summary of the main points. During an inquiry, you can make further comments, in the form of a supplementary submission, to provide additional evidence or comment on other evidence obtained by the committee.

How to lodge a submission

You can post or fax a hard copy of your submission to the secretary of the relevant committee. Alternatively, you can send an electronic copy of the submission by email. Individual committee addresses are contained in inquiry advertisements and are available on the Australian Parliament's website.

The author must sign a hard-copy submission either on his or her own behalf or on behalf of the organisation making the submission. It is not necessary to send a signed copy of a submission originally sent by email. Those signing on behalf of an organisation should indicate the level at which the submission has been authorised (eg President, Chief Executive, Secretary).

Your submission should include a return address and a contact telephone number. Submissions forwarded by email should include the name, postal address and phone number of the person or organisation making the submission.

Submissions should be lodged by the advertised closing date. You can request an extension of time by contacting the committee secretary, although an extension may not always be possible, particularly if the committee has to report in a short timeframe.

Where possible, hard copy submissions should be typed on A4 paper. This helps with reproduction of the submission. If this is not possible, hand written submissions are acceptable, but care should be taken to ensure that they are legible and suitable for photocopying.

It is helpful if electronic submissions are either in Microsoft Word® or Portable Document Format (PDF). This assists committees with publishing submissions on the Parliament's website.

Things you need to know

Publication of submissions

You should be aware that submissions are part of a committee's public record and are usually published on the Parliament's web site. The public can also ask for a hard copy of a submission by contacting the committee secretariat. Contact details of individuals are deleted before the document is published, but the name of the person or organisation is included.

Once a submission is received by a committee, it cannot be withdrawn or altered without the committee's permission; nor can it be published or disclosed to any other person unless or until the committee has authorised its publication. If there are additional matters you wish to raise, this can be done in a supplementary submission.

Once the committee has received a submission it will decide whether to accept it as a submission and authorise its publication.

Confidential submissions

You can request that all or part of your submission remain confidential. This should be indicated clearly in the front of the submission. You could also consider putting any confidential information in an appendix to the submission to allow the body of the submission to be published.