

NZCCSS Guide to Government Writing a Petition



What is a petition and How do I start one?

A document addressed to the House of Representatives asking for a specific action to be taken. This can be about a policy or law, or a grievance.

Anyone can start a petition, regardless of age or residential status.
A petition can either be paper-based or electronic:

Paper-based	Electronic
Include a cover sheet with your name, address & the request	Include a cover sheet with your name, address & the request
Wording of petitions should be checked before signature collection begins to ensure it can be presented to the house. The Office of the Clerk can assist with this, petitions@parliament.govt.nz or (04) 817 6711	Wording of petitions is automatically checked to ensure it can be presented to the house – but you can email and check wording prior to submitting
Wording space for a petition is quite small	
Hybrid petitions (those with both paper and electronic signing options) must contain identical wording	
When signing people must provide their full name & signature on a piece of paper which has the full text of the petition request (this must be on all pages with signatures)	When signing people will need to enter their name & email address on the petition page

Members don't typically ask how many signatures a petition has, so the quality and evidence to support a petition is more important than the number of signatures you get.

What does the petition need to contain?

- Your name (this will be published on the parliament website) or organisation name if you have permission (see below)
- Your contact details (these won't be published *)
- A brief title for your petition
- Your request to the House of Representatives:
 - This must be addressed to the House of Representatives
 - Ask them to take action
 - Use respectful/moderate language
 - Not include unsubstantiated allegations/statements (if it does you will be asked for verification). You can express a point of view as long as it's clear it's a point of view

* You can request to see signatures on a petition, but this must be done in parliament under supervision of parliamentary staff

If submitting on behalf of an organisation you need authentication to demonstrate you work for that organisation and the organisation has given permission for you to represent them (i.e. meeting minutes)

Writing a Petition



Once closed for signatures

An MP must present the petition to parliament

- You can ask an MP to present the petition at any time during the petition process. This could be any MP (does not need to be your local MP)
- An MP cannot present the petition if they have signed it, but they can endorse it and promote it (share on social media etc)
- The petition is read out by the clerk

The petition is then referred to the petitions committee who meet every sitting week

- The petition committee was started under 53rd parliament and consists of 4 members

Petitions will appear on the agenda as they are received – the faster you the petitioner can response to the petitions office the faster it'll be on the agenda – the record was 19 minutes

The decision regarding a petition must be unanimous, if split it stays on the agenda until they can decide what to do or they can send to a select committee or the minister responsible

You may be asked for a written submission (as the petitioner) or the committee may ask for feedback from government agencies or organisations

You may also be asked speak about your petition (as the petitioner) – a maximum of 10 minutes

Consideration of a petition can take a year (depends in part how quickly the petitioner gets back their report)

Every petition has a report in the house

This report may include recommendations to the Government and once received the Government has 60 days to respond but there is no obligation for them to act on the recommendations.

You can only submit on a topic once within a parliamentary term – once a petition on that topic has been reported on, no other petitions on the same topic will be considered until the next parliament.

If multiple petitions on the same topic are submitted before any report is released on the topic, the report will respond to all of these petitions at once. Anyone who submits on this topic after a report is released on the topic will be sent the report already written on that topic.

How can I view or sign other petitions?

You can view petitions on [Parliaments website](#). This includes both those that are Open for Signatures, as well as those in other stages of consideration; closed for signatures, with the Select Committee or have been reported on or referred to a minister.

For petitions that have already been reported on, this website allows you to read reports provided on petitions you may be interested in. This is particularly handy if someone has previously submitted a petition on the same or similar topic