



e-Petitions information and guidelines

e-Petitions

Petitioning is one of the traditional methods by which members of the public can make a formal request to the Legislative Assembly. In addition to a paper format, the Legislative Assembly also allows online petitioning. Petitions submitted in electronic format are referred to as “e-Petitions”.

Information on e-Petitions is available on the ACT Legislative Assembly website at www.parliament.act.gov.au. You can locate e-Petitions, and if you wish, join a current e-Petition, through this website. When a Minister responds to an e-Petition you will also be able to read the response on the website.

e-Petitions and paper petitions

e-Petitions do not replace the paper petition process.

If you wish to start a petition you can choose to circulate either a paper petition or an e-Petition. As the “Principal Petitioner”, you will also have the option of running both processes in order to reach the widest audience.

Who is eligible to join an e-Petition?

Most people are eligible to initiate or join an e-Petition. People who can petition the ACT Legislative Assembly are ACT residents and/or citizens as set out in the Assembly’s standing orders.

The Principal Petitioner will identify who might have an interest in, and want to support, the petition.

How are e-Petitions started?

Step One: Approach a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) to sponsor your petition

The key difference between the paper-based and electronic process for petitions relates to how the process is started. In the case of e-Petitions, you must seek the sponsorship of an MLA as the first step. (Paper petitions are usually circulated for signatures prior to locating a sponsoring MLA.)

Only an MLA can lodge the petition with the Clerk for announcement in the Assembly.

You may approach any MLA to sponsor an e-Petition, however you should approach only one MLA at a time.

Information on how to contact MLAs is available through the Assembly’s website at www.parliament.act.gov.au or you can contact the Assembly for this information on 6205 0439.

Step Two: Complete an e-Petition request form

An e-Petition request form is included with this brochure and is also available on the Assembly’s website. You may choose to use this form when seeking an MLA to support your proposed e-Petition. The form records:

- the precise wording of the e-Petition;
- the eligibility criteria for persons wishing to join, eg ACT residents;
- the period the e-Petition will be on the website;
- the sponsoring MLA’s details; and
- the Principal Petitioner’s details.

It is not compulsory to use this form to request an MLA to support a proposed e-Petition. However, an e-petition request form must be filled out once an MLA agrees to sponsor the e-Petition, which both the MLA and you are required to sign.

The MLA may request changes before agreeing to sponsor an e-Petition. If you originally used the e-Petition request form to seek the MLA’s support, you may need to fill out and sign a revised version of this form that reflects the MLA’s changes.

Step Three: The MLA then provides the signed e-Petition request form to the Clerk of the Assembly

The Clerk will check that it meets the requirements set out in the standing orders. If these requirements are satisfied, the e-Petition is posted on the website until the specified closing date. (The Clerk or the Office of the Legislative Assembly is available at any stage of the e-Petition development process for advice regarding conformity with the standing orders).

How long can an e-Petition be posted on the website?

All current e-Petitions are accessible from the website. An e-Petition can be posted on the website for a

minimum period of one week and a maximum period of six months.

The Principal Petitioner, together with the sponsoring MLA, decide the length of time the e-Petition will remain open for people to join.

Who will promote an e-Petition?

As with paper petitions, the Principal Petitioner is responsible for raising awareness in the community about the availability of the specific e-Petition. (The name and address of the Principal Petitioner will be provided on the website.)

The ACT Legislative Assembly's role is only to facilitate the e-Petitions process.

What happens after the e-Petition is closed?

Once the posting period for an e-Petition has closed, the e-Petition will be made available in hard copy format for presentation to the Assembly. The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly will announce the terms of the petition in the sponsoring MLA's name at the first available opportunity. The e-Petition will be referred to the relevant Minister and, if it has received 500 or more signatures, will also be referred to an appropriate Assembly committee.

Will Ministers respond to e-Petitions in the Assembly?

The relevant Minister must present a response to the Assembly. These responses are also recorded in the *Minutes of Proceedings* and *Hansard*.

In the case of e-Petitions, when a Minister presents a response to the Assembly, the response will also be posted on the website at www.parliament.act.gov.au.

Conditions of use

If you wish to join an e-Petition, you will need to accept the e-Petition's conditions of use, which outline:

- the eligibility requirements;
- the requirement that a person may only join an e-Petition once; and
- the prohibition on the use of false names.

A breach of the conditions of use might amount to contempt of Parliament. Actions that are considered to be in contempt of Parliament include:

- presenting a forged or falsified document to the Assembly or a committee;
- submitting a petition containing false, scandalous or groundless allegations; or
- inducing a person to sign a petition by fraud and misleading the Assembly.

The Assembly may take action against you if it finds you in contempt.

Once you accept the conditions of use, you will be provided with a random identification number. You will be required to record this number when joining an e-Petition, along with your name, address (including postcode) and email address.

What about privacy?

Only the name and address of the Principal Petitioner will be made public on the web site.

The personal details of people who join e-Petitions will not be published in any form on the website. The website will only show a tally of the number of signatures collected.

A Privacy Statement on the website details how your personal information will be protected.

Rules concerning petitions

Petitions to be lodged with Clerk and to bear certificate

83. Every petition shall be lodged with the Clerk by 5 pm on the day previous to the meeting of the Assembly at which it is proposed that it be presented; when presented the petition must bear a certificate signed by the Clerk or the Deputy Clerk that it conforms with the standing orders.

Petitions which do not conform with the standing orders

83A. Petitions which do not conform with the standing orders may be lodged with the Clerk and may be presented by a Minister in accordance with standing order 74. The Minister may indicate the subject matter of the paper and the number of signatories.

Time for presenting certain petitions

84. A petition referring to a motion or an order of the day may be presented when such motion or order of the day is called on. A petition presented in this manner must contain certification from the Clerk or Deputy Clerk that it is in order.

To be addressed to the Assembly, legible, and free of sponsorship

85. Every petition shall be addressed to the Assembly, shall refer to a matter within the power of the Assembly, shall request action by the Assembly, and shall be fairly written, typewritten, printed or reproduced by mechanical process, without interlineation or erasure.

To be from residents/citizens of the Australian Capital Territory

86. Petitions must only contain signatures of residents/citizens of the Australian Capital Territory.

To be in English or accompanied by translation

87. Every petition shall be in the English language or be accompanied by a translation certified to be correct. A person certifying a translation to be correct shall affix his or her name and address to the translation.

To be signed on the same sheet

88. Every petition shall contain the signature and address of at least one person on the sheet on which the petition is inscribed.

To be signed by persons themselves

89. Each signature must be made by the person signing in his or her own handwriting: provided that persons unable to write shall affix their marks in the presence of a witness, who shall, as such, also affix his or her signature and address, and the address of the petitioner.

Signatures not to be transferred

90. Every signature must be written on a page bearing the terms of the petition, or the action asked for by the petition. Signatures must not be copied, pasted or transferred on to the petition or placed on a blank page on the reverse of a sheet containing the terms of the petition.

To be received only as from persons signing

91. All petitions shall be received only as the petitions of the parties signing the same.

From corporations

92. A petition from a corporation must be made under its common seal; otherwise it will be received as the petition of the individuals who signed it.

Documents not to be attached

93. Letters, affidavits, or other documents, may not be attached to a petition.

Must be respectful and within ministerial responsibility

94. Every petition shall be respectful, decorous and temperate in its language, and shall not contain irrelevant statements. If, in the opinion of the Speaker, the subject matter is not within the ministerial responsibility of the Territory or is critical of a character or conduct of a person, contains unbecoming expressions, is not respectful, decorous or temperate in its language or offends any standing order other than those relating to petitions, the paper shall be returned to the Member who lodged it.

Must be lodged by a Member

95. Petitions for presentation to the Assembly can be lodged with the Clerk only by Members, but Members cannot lodge petitions from themselves. Petitions shall be free from any indication that a Member may have initiated the petition.

Members to sign and indicate number of petitioners

96. Every Member lodging a petition with the Clerk for presentation to the Assembly shall sign the beginning of that petition and indicate the number of eligible petitioners.

Standing orders to be observed

97. Every Member lodging a petition shall take care that the petition conforms to these standing orders.

Clerk to announce particulars of petitions lodged

98. The Clerk shall make an announcement as to the petitions lodged for presentation to the Assembly, indicating in the case of each petition the Member who lodged it, the identity and number of the eligible petitioners and the subject matter of the petition, and any Ministerial responses to petitions previously presented. No discussion upon the subject matter of a petition shall be allowed at the time of presentation.

Question on presentation

99. Upon the presentation of a petition to the Assembly, or on the next sitting day, a Member may move without notice that a particular petition be referred to a committee.

Referred to committee

99A. A petition or e-petition with at least 500 signatories from residents/citizens of the Australian Capital Territory shall be referred to the relevant Assembly standing committee for consideration. In the event that the subject matter of the petition makes it unclear which committee it should be referred to, the Speaker will determine the appropriate committee.

Referred to Ministers – Minister's response

100. A copy of every petition lodged with the Clerk and received by the Assembly shall be referred by the Clerk to the Minister responsible for the administration of the matter which is the subject of the petition. A Minister must respond to that petition within 3 months of the tabling of the petition by lodging a response with the Clerk for presentation to the Assembly, such response being announced at the end of the petitions announcement.

Electronic petitions ("e-petitions")

- 100A. (a) An e-petition is a petition:
- (i) in the correct form, stating a grievance and containing a request for action by the Assembly;
 - (ii) sponsored by a Member and lodged with the Clerk for publication on the Assembly's website for a nominated period ("posted period"); and

- (iii) in which persons elect to indicate their support (“join the petition”) by electronically providing their name, address (including postcode), email address and signifying their intention to join the petition.
- (b) The posted period for an e-petition is to be a minimum of one week and a maximum of six months from the date of publication on the Assembly’s website.
- (c) A Member sponsoring an e-petition must provide the Clerk with the details of the petition in the correct form, the posted period and a signed acknowledgment that they are prepared to sponsor the e-petition.
- (d) Once published on the Assembly’s website an e-petition cannot be altered.
- (e) Only one e-petition dealing with substantially the same grievance and requesting substantially the same action by the Assembly shall be published on the Assembly’s website at the same time.
- (f) Once the posted period for an e-petition has elapsed, a paper copy of the petition shall be printed by the Clerk in full (including the details of the persons who joined the petition) and presented to the Assembly.
- (g) An e-petition published on the Assembly’s website, but not presented to the Assembly prior to the expiration of an Assembly, may be presented to the subsequent Assembly to become a petition of the subsequent Assembly.
- (h) An e-petition cannot be sponsored after the expiration of an Assembly and until the new Assembly has met and Members sworn.
- (i) Persons must join an e-petition by filling out their correct details and personally agreeing to join the e-petition, and by no-one else, except in case of incapacity from sickness.
- (j) A person cannot sign or join the same e-petition more than once.
- (c) The Clerk is authorised to create and maintain an appropriate website on which to publish electronic petitions, responses to petitions and explanatory information and do all things necessary in order to give effect to these standing orders.
- (d) The Clerk must dispose of all electronic personal data related to the posting and joining of an e-petition within six months after an electronic petition is printed and presented to the Assembly.

Application of standing orders to e-petitions

100C. The standing orders relating to petitions apply to e-petitions in-so-far-as they can be applied.

The Legislative Assembly can be contacted on:

Phone	(02) 6205 3116 (General Inquiries) (02) 6205 0173 (Deputy Clerk’s Office)
Facsimile	(02) 6205 3109
Email	LApetitions@parliament.act.gov.au
Website	www.parliament.act.gov.au

Duties and powers of the Clerk and Speaker regarding e-petitions

- 100B. (a) The Clerk may decline to publish an e-petition on the Assembly’s website not in conformity with these standing orders and advise the sponsoring Member accordingly.
- (b) The Clerk or a Member may seek a ruling from the Speaker about the conformity of any petition with these standing orders.



e-Petition request form

This form may be used when seeking to obtain sponsorship from a Member of the ACT Legislative Assembly of a proposed e-Petition for posting on the ACT Legislative Assembly website.

Please ensure this form is completed in full and signed prior to forwarding to the MLA's office.

Name of Member of the Legislative Assembly sponsoring e-Petition*: (to be completed by Principal Petitioner)

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Principal Petitioner's Details: (to be completed by Principal Petitioner)

Name:	
Address:	
Telephone (office hours):	
Email:	

Proposed e-Petition Details: (to be completed by Principal Petitioner)

Note, a 250 word limit applies to the total text of the grievance and action required

Subject of e-Petition:	
The following residents of the ACT draw to the attention of the Assembly (state the text of grievance):	



e-Petition request form

Your petitioners,
therefore, request the
Assembly to (state the text
of the action required):

Closing date (posting period minimum one week/maximum six months from date of posting):

Signature:

Date:

Note: The Member of the Legislative Assembly will contact you to advise of the outcome of your request. If the MLA agrees to sponsor the e-Petition, you may be required to attend their office to sign another e-Petition request form if there are any required changes to the e-Petition.

Member of the Legislative Assembly details: (to be completed by the MLA – the completed form is then to be forwarded to the Office of the Clerk of the Assembly)

Name:

Electorate:

I agree to sponsor the above petition

Signature:

Date: