

Making a written submission

Victoria's joint investigatory committees welcome submissions as sources of evidence, information and opinion. These notes provide a number of suggestions on how you might prepare and present a submission.

Who may make a submission?

Any person or organisation can make a submission to a committee. Individuals, community groups, private organisations, representatives of government departments and agencies and anyone else interested in an inquiry currently before the committee are encouraged to make a submission.

Terms of reference

Before preparing your submission, it is important that you read the inquiry's terms of reference carefully, as your submission must be relevant to the committee's inquiry. The committee advertises its terms of reference, calls for submissions and identifies a due date for submissions in daily newspapers and on its website. If an issue is of obvious local concern, advertisements will also be placed in regional and district newspapers. If you do not have a copy of the terms of reference, please contact the committee's office.

Preparing a submission

It is most important that your submission addresses all or part of the terms of reference. You do not have to comment on every aspect of the terms of reference, nor are you confined to just one aspect. Your submission may contain factual information, opinion or both. You may wish to draw the attention of the committee to something relevant to the inquiry. You may choose to emphasise solutions to the matter or issue before the committee. This is entirely your choice. Your submission will be welcomed by the committee provided it is relevant, not frivolous or offensive in nature, and addresses the terms of reference.

Submission format

There is no specific method for organising or presenting a submission. Your contribution can take the form of a letter, a short summary paper or a longer research document. You can include relevant data in appendices or incorporate them in the body of the text. It is important that the structure, argument and conclusions of your submission are clear.

There are certain technical conventions that the committee asks you to observe, where possible:

Hard copy or electronic submissions

You can send your submission in hard copy, or electronically. If you send it in hard copy, a typed document on A4 paper is preferred. If this is not possible, a handwritten submission is acceptable; please ensure that your handwriting is legible.

Verification of your details

Please sign the submission. Sign on behalf of yourself, or on behalf of the organisation you are representing. If you are representing an organisation, please indicate your position in the organisation. If relevant, specify at what level the submission has been authorised: branch, executive, president, sub-committee, executive committee, national body, etc. If you are sending your submission electronically, please provide your name, and relevant contact details (such as address or phone number).

Electronic submission

You can provide your submission electronically, by email or on CD/DVD. Microsoft Word 2003 or PDF are the preferred formats. Submissions sent by email must not exceed eight

megabytes in size. If you have any questions about the suitability of your file format/size, please contact the committee office.

Supplementary material

You may wish to support your submission with other forms of material, such as a video, photographs or objects. Please contact the staff of the committee if you plan to do this, so that appropriate arrangements can be made. This can be on a loan or donation basis. Any material borrowed by the committee will be returned on completion of the inquiry.

Language of submissions

Submissions form part of the committee's proceedings, and help inform the committee about matters relevant to the investigations. Most submissions are made public by the committee, and can be published on the committee's website. Submissions should be relevant, not contain offensive language or remarks, and should not be frivolous or vexatious. A committee can choose not to accept a submission if the committee feels it breaches any of these guidelines.

Sending your submission

You can post your submission to:

[Committee name]

[Inquiry title]

Parliament of Victoria

Spring St

EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002.

If you would like to email or fax your submission, check the inquiry webpage via www.parliament.vic.gov.au/committees, or phone 03 8682 2875, to obtain the correct email address or fax number.

Parliamentary Privilege

A submission to a committee becomes a committee document once the committee formally decides to accept it as a submission. A committee may decide not to accept a submission as evidence if it is not relevant to the terms of reference, or is offensive. Unless you have requested that the submission remain confidential (see below), it is normally published after the committee has received and examined it and authorised its publication.

Once the committee has authorised the release of a submission, any subsequent publication of it by the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. This means that what you say in your submission cannot be used in court against you or anyone else.

Parliamentary privilege only extends to submissions that are published by the committee. If a submission is published in another form or for another purpose, that publication will not be protected by parliamentary privilege. This means that you should not reproduce the submission in another format or context. You can, however, refer others to your submission on the committee's website, or advise them to contact the committee direct.

It is against parliamentary rules for anyone to try to stop you from making a submission by threats or intimidation. It is also a breach of these rules for anyone to harass you or discriminate against you because you have made a submission, and Parliament can take action against this behaviour.

Confidentiality

If you wish to have your submission kept confidential, please say so clearly at the top of the submission or in a covering note, explaining why you want it to be kept confidential. If you want part of the submission to be confidential, please put that part on a separate page. The

committee will consider requests for confidentiality, but cannot make promises in advance. If you have concerns about confidentiality, please discuss these with the Committee's Executive Officer before you make a submission.

Public hearings

Under certain circumstances, the committee might wish to discuss a matter further with the author of a submission. If this occurs, the committee will contact you to discuss your appearance at a public hearing. For more information about appearing at a public hearing, see Giving Evidence at a Public Hearing.

January 2008