



2004

Parliament of Tasmania

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE

WORKING ARRANGEMENTS OF THE PARLIAMENT

REPORT NO. 12

E-PETITIONS

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr Aird MLC (Chair)
Mrs Smith MLC
Mr Wilkinson MLC
Mr Wing MLC

Mrs Jackson MHA
Mr Llewellyn MHA
Mrs Napier MHA
Ms Putt MHA

INTRODUCTION

The Committee was established by both Houses of the Tasmanian Parliament at the commencement of the First Session of the Forty-fourth Parliament on 7 October 1998. The Terms of Reference for the Committee are set out below.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

That a Joint Select Committee be appointed with power to send for persons and papers, with leave to sit during any adjournment of either House and with leave to adjourn from place to place, and with leave to report from time to time, to inquire into and report upon —

- (1) Measures for reform which may improve the performance and efficiency of the Parliament and its Members having particular regard to, but not confined by, a consideration of —
 - (a) the Statement of Principles agreed to by resolution of the Legislative Council on the 3rd and 4th day of September 1997;
 - (b) the procedures for the resolution of dispute and deadlocks between both Houses including standing order provisions and Parliamentary custom and conventions;
 - (c) the system of Statutory Standing, Joint Sessional and Joint Select Committees of both Houses, their roles, functions and relevance to contemporary Parliamentary practice;
 - (d) whether a separate Appropriation Act for —
 - (i) the Parliament;
 - (ii) the Auditor-General's office;
 - (iii) the Ombudsman's Office;
 - (iv) the Electoral Office;
 is desirable.
 - (e) and any other matters incidental thereto.
- (2) That the Committee be authorised to disclose or publish, as it thinks fit, any evidence or document presented to it prior to such evidence being reported to either House.
- (3) That the Committee finalise its report by 31 March 1999.*

*Since the initial establishment of the Committee, it has been reconstituted as necessary following prorogations to allow for the continuation of its enquiries. The latest re-establishment of the Committee occurred on 7 April 2004.

The Committee has tabled the following reports to date —

Report No. 1	Estimates
Report No. 2	Parliamentary Standing Committees
Report No. 3	Government Business Enterprises and Government Corporations Scrutiny Committees
Report No. 4	Review of the Estimates Committees Process November 1998
Report No. 5	Arrangements for the Opening of Parliament
Report No. 6	Citizen's Right of Reply
Report No. 7	New Parliamentary Committee System
Report No. 8	Committee Meeting Times and Resources
Report No. 9	Selection of Government Businesses for Scrutiny
Report No. 10	Acknowledgement of Traditional People
Report No. 11	Issues of Parliamentary Procedure

REASONS FOR THIS REPORT

The Hon *Sue Napier* MHA requested that the Committee consider the introduction of E-Petitions as a result of her visit to Queensland to investigate the system operating in that State.

BACKGROUND

Petitioning is a method by which members of the public are able to make a formal request to the Parliament. Currently, petitions are only possible in paper form. E-Petitions do not replace the paper petition process.

According to a paper prepared by Mr Neil Laurie, Clerk of the Queensland Parliament entitled *Progress of E-Petitions trial*, which is attached as Appendix 1 :

“In terms of process, the significant difference between the E-Petitions process and the traditional petitions process, is that the Parliament via its web site ‘hosts’ the petition and before it can be ‘hosted’ it must be sponsored by a member and checked for conformity with Sessional Orders by the Clerk.

The E-Petitions process involves four key stages :

1. Opening an E-Petition

This involves the provision of information about E-Petitions (and the petitioning process), finding a sponsoring MP, lodgement of E-Petitions, checking for conformity with the Clerk and publishing of the E-Petition to the Petitions Web Site.

2. Joining an E-Petition

This process includes locating the E-Petitions site and current E-Petitions, signing an E-Petition (electronic acknowledgement) and receiving acknowledgement after the process.

3. Closing an E-Petition

This involves the closing of the E-Petition, the tabling of the E-Petition, the response development and the logging of the response.

4. Disposal of Details and Deletion of an E-Petition

This process includes e-mailing the E-Petition response to signatories who supplied their e-mail details, the deletion of the personal details of signatories and the deleting of closed tabled E-Petitions at the end of the then current Parliament.”

SUMMARY OF OTHER JURISDICTIONS

The Queensland Parliament is the only state that has implemented a system of E-petitions, although some interest has been expressed by a number of other jurisdictions. A copy of the Queensland Parliament's *E-Petitions – A trial of online petitioning* is attached to this Report as Appendix 2.

The Scottish Parliament also has an E-petitions system run by a university and the Senate accepts E-petitions sponsored by members on their own or organisations' websites as long as the Senator verifies.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The Committee noted, in particular, concerns relating to privacy and access to the electronic database and also the fraudulent signing of E-petitions.

In the Queensland system a privacy disclaimer makes it clear that the email details are only kept for notification and then destroyed.

No access to the electronic database is permitted. The view taken was that the Parliament was not in the business of compiling databases of names. Of course, anyone can gain access to the tabled petition, on which email addresses appear. From this a database could be created.

The Queensland Parliament has had no problems reported or suggested of people fraudulently signing E-Petitions. They are not checked, in the same way that hard copy petitions are not checked, unless a problem is reported.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Committee would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Queensland Parliament in providing the relevant information and documentation.

It should also be noted that the Queensland Parliament has offered to provide their system free of charge to the Tasmanian Parliament.

OPTIONS

1. Maintain the current traditional process of paper petitions only.
2. Introduce an E-Petitions process, similar to that in the Queensland Parliament, as an additional method of petitioning with the following rules :

A. Electronic petition (“E-Petition”)

- (1) An e-petition is a petition:
 - (a) in the correct form, stating a grievance and containing a request for action by the House;
 - (b) sponsored by a Member and lodged with the Clerk for publication on the Parliament’s Internet Website for a nominated period (“posted period”);
 - (c) persons may elect to indicate their support of (“join the petition”) by electronically providing their name, address (including postcode) and signifying their intention to join the petition.
- (2) 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 Parliament’s Internet Website.
- (3) The member sponsoring the 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.
- (4) Once published on the Parliament’s Internet Website an e-petition cannot be altered.
- (5) Only one e-petition dealing with substantially the same grievance and requesting substantially the same action by the House shall be published on the Parliament’s Internet Website at the same time.
- (6) 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 House by the Member who sponsored the e-petition.
- (7) An e-petition published on the Parliament’s Internet Website, but not presented to the House prior to the dissolution of the Parliament, may be presented to the subsequent Parliament to become a petition of the subsequent Parliament.
- (8) An e-petition cannot be sponsored after the dissolution of the Parliament and until the new Parliament has been summoned and members sworn.

B. General Rules for E-Petitions

- (1) 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.
- (2) A person cannot sign or join the same paper petition or e-petition more than once.

C. Duties and powers of the Clerk and Speaker regarding E-petitions

- (1) The Clerk may decline to publish an e-petition on the Parliament's Internet Website not in conformity with these Orders and advise the sponsoring member accordingly.
- (2) The Clerk or a member may seek a ruling from the Speaker about the conformity of any petition with these Orders.
- (3) The Clerk is authorised to create and maintain an appropriate Internet Website on which to publish electronic petitions, paper petitions, responses to petitions and explanatory information and do all things necessary in order to give effect to these Orders.
- (4) 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 House.

D. The Standing Orders and Rules for Petitions apply to E-petitions in-so-far-as they can be applied.

RECOMMENDATION :

The Committee recommends :

1. A process of E-Petitions be introduced on a trial basis into the Parliament of Tasmania, similar to that in Queensland; and
2. That the rules for E-Petitions be those listed on pages 5-6 of this report.

Progress of E-Petitions trial

Neil Laurie

Clerk of the Parliament (Queensland)

Background

On 26 August 2002 the Legislative Assembly approved Sessional Orders that established “E-Petitions”. E-Petitions is simply a model of online petitioning.

The genesis for E-Petitions was the Queensland Government’s *Restoring Integrity* Good Government Plan, released on 21 January 2001. That plan included a commitment to trial the feasibility of the Queensland Parliament accepting petitions online. Following the Government’s election victory it sought to implement this element of the plan.

The Parliamentary Service, with assistance from the E-Democracy Unit within the Community Engagement Division of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, developed the practical working E-Petition model. The Parliamentary Service is responsible for ongoing maintenance of the Petitions Web Site (including E-Petitions). Evaluation of the project is being managed by the E-Democracy Unit, with recommendations flowing out of the evaluation to be developed and approved jointly by both the Parliamentary Service and the E-Democracy Unit. The project is being funded by the E-Democracy Unit for the term of the trial, although no additional funding or resources have been provided to the Parliamentary Service at this stage for day to day maintenance.

Overview

E-Petitions are located on a dedicated page of the Queensland Parliament’s website. From this web site Queenslanders can locate E-Petitions, find out information about the status of E-Petitions, and if it is a current E-Petition, join the E-Petition. Alternatively, with the assistance of a sponsoring Member of Parliament, individuals can become principal petitioners and start an E-Petition.

The E-Petitions process has not replaced the traditional petitions process. Rather, Sessional Orders now provide for two types of petitions:

- E-Petitions; and
- Paper Petitions (traditional petitions).

The E-Petitions process

In terms of process, the significant difference between the E-Petitions process and the traditional petitions process, is that the Parliament via its web site “hosts” the petition and before it can be “hosted” it must be sponsored by a member and checked for conformity with Sessional Orders by the Clerk.

Neil Laurie

The E-Petitions process involves four key stages:

1. *Opening an E-Petition*

This involves the provision of information about E-Petitions (and the petitioning process), finding a sponsoring MP, lodgement of E-Petitions, checking for conformity with the Clerk and publishing of the E-Petition to the Petitions Web Site.

2. *Joining an E-Petition*

This process includes locating the E-Petitions site and current E-Petitions, signing an E-Petition (electronic acknowledgement) and receiving acknowledgment after the process.

3. *Closing an E-Petition*

This involves the closing of the E-Petition, the tabling of the E-Petition, the response development and the logging of the response.

4. *Disposal of Details and Deletion of an E-Petition*

This process includes e-mailing the E-Petition response to signatories who supplied their e-mail details, the deletion of the personal details of signatories and the deleting of closed tabled E-Petitions at the end of the then current Parliament.

The E-Petitions process (as listed above) is detailed in the flow charts attached (Appendixes I-IV).

In addition to the introduction of E-Petitions, the 26 August Sessional Orders (Appendix V), placed significant responsibilities on the Clerk to ensure the publication of information about, not only E-Petitions, but paper petitions and Ministerial responses to all petitions. As a result, the Petitions Web Site is now a central access point for information relevant to the petitioning processes (both paper and E-Petitions).

The site is linked prominently from the Parliament Web Site's main page with an "E-Petitions" button and featured within its menu structure. The site is consistent with the Parliament web site's look and feel.

The web site

The Petitions Web Site includes:

- ◆ A record of current E-Petitions - including subject matter, precise wording, eligibility, principal petitioner's name and contact details, current number of signatures (tally) and closing date
- ◆ A record of closed E-Petitions - including subject matter, precise wording, eligibility, principal petitioner's name and contact details, sponsor's name (MP) (included after tabling), number of

signatures collected, closing date, and current status (ie date tabled and referred to Minister; or date Minister's response tabled and a link to the response)

- ◆ A record of tabled paper petitions including subject matter, precise wording, number of signatures collected, closing date, principal petitioner's name and contact details, eligibility and current status (ie. date tabled, date referred to Minister, or date Minister's response tabled and a link to the response)
- ◆ Ministerial responses to tabled paper petitions (if a response is tabled).

Support material on the site includes:

- ◆ Paper Petitions: General information, Rules, Form for Paper Petitions
- ◆ E-Petitions: General information, Rules, Proposal Form, Conditions of Use message
- ◆ Feedback forms
- ◆ Petitions Web Site User Survey
- ◆ E-Petitions process User Survey
- ◆ Link to existing MPs database (includes phone, email and mail contact details)
- ◆ Privacy Statement
- ◆ Send a link" function (to send page links to friends)

Responsiveness

As stated above, Ministerial responses to tabled E-Petitions are now posted on the web site. When joining an E-Petition, signatories are provided with the option to supply their email address to receive an automatic notification when a ministerial response is posted in relation to that E-Petition. The joining form also outlines the alternative options of regularly monitoring the site or searching Hansard records to locate whether a response has occurred. After a response to an E-Petition is posted on the web site, an email notification is generated from the Parliamentary Service to the E-Petition signatories. The email provides a link to the response and informs that their details are being deleted from electronic storage.

If no response is posted within six months of the date the E-Petition was tabled, an email notification will be generated from the Parliamentary Service to the E-Petition signatories. The email informs that no response has been posted yet, suggests checking the site at a later stage in case a response is posted and also informs that their details are being deleted from electronic storage in accordance with the Data Retention policy.

Major issues raised during development

Authentication

The Government's commitment to an E-Petitions system stated that it would give consideration to the potential for collecting **valid and verifiable** personal details. It was quickly realised, however, during development that the collection of valid and verifiable personal details was an inherent problem, whether paper-based or electronic. In the case of traditional petitions to the Queensland Parliament, the validity of the personal details provided has always been accepted at face value – that is, no verification procedures were ever undertaken unless there was a suggestion of fraud.

Whilst several authentication options were considered in scoping the E-Petitioning commitment, it was identified that there is currently no means to authenticate petitioners' personal details in an online environment that is universally available or equitable (ie. does not exclude eligible petitioners). As a result, the E-Petitions system in the first instance does not provide any level of real authentication. However, a committee of three members representing the Government and Opposition did suggest that a requirement be that signatories to E-Petitions supply an email addresses be mandatory. This was adopted, but in reality is an illusory authentication method (petitioners could supply any email address, they are not checked).

Security and Unique ID Generation

The E-Petitions system needed to provide and convey security to its users to ensure that people felt comfortable using the system and providing their personal details. There also had to be some safeguard to computer hacking/fraud etc. In order to prevent people mass-joining E-Petitions with an automatic submission program, the system was designed so as to automatically generate a unique ID to be used in each E-Petition submission. The ID is displayed prior to the Sign On petition submission screen, and must be included in the submission form. The generating program monitors the IDs issued, and each ID may only be used once.

E-Petitions Data Retention Policy

As detailed above, the personal details (name, address, email address) collected from signatories of an E-Petition are deleted after an email notification is generated to its signatories (who have supplied their email addresses for notification). The email notification occurs when:

- ◆ A Ministerial response is posted within 6 months of the date the E-Petition is tabled; or
- ◆ A Ministerial response is not posted within 6 months of the date the E-Petition was tabled.

Neil Laurie

As a result, electronic records relating to each E-Petition is stored for a maximum of 6 months after the tabling date. The Parliamentary Service will not keep, generate or supply to members or departments data lists of email addresses from the E-Petitioning processes.

The names and address details of signatories **are not available on the web site**, however printed copies of the tabled E-Petition are available on request to the public, as has always been the case with traditional petitions.

Technical Details

The Petitions Web Site and associated E-Petitions system was developed in-house by the Parliamentary Service in collaboration with and financed by the E-Democracy Unit.

The E-Petitions web interface primarily consists of two separate components:

- ◆ the Signing interface which enables residents of Queensland to sign an E-Petition; and
- ◆ the Administration interface which enables Queensland Parliamentary Service personnel to administer the E-Petitions process.

The E-Petitions web interface was developed in accordance with the E-Petitions business requirements developed and agreed to by the Queensland Parliamentary Services and the E-Democracy Unit of the Department of Premiers and Cabinet.

The front pages are HTML, its program is written in CGI script (C++) and is designed to be hosted by a Microsoft SQL Server database.

The E-Petitions Administration interface has also been developed in HTML to enable additions and modification to the backend SQL Server database to be carried out via the Queensland Parliament's internet or intranet. In effect, any person, anywhere in the world could administer the E-Petitions database provided they had an internet connection and the correct logon user name and password.

The E-Petitions Signing interface and the Administration interface consist of a series of HTML form pages which interact with the Petitions CGI script. The HTML pages and CGI script reside on the Parliamentary Internet web server. In addition to the HTML pages and CGI script, there are a number of Javascript files which are used for data validation.

Resources

Design and implementation costs

Initial design and implementation cost was in the vicinity of \$80,000. However, the greatest component of this related to hardware purchase (server), software (Microsoft SQL Server Licenses) and the notional time of an in-house software developer (software design). If jurisdictions already possessed adequate servers and appropriate licenses, then implementation costs would be minimal.

Ongoing resource requirements

In order to reduce the amount of time involved with maintaining the E-Petitions system and to deter human error, the E-Petitions processes was designed to be as automated as possible. For online processes that are not automated, an E-Petitions Administration Interface provides access to update the E-Petitions system for non-technical Parliament staff (ie staff in the Clerk's Office).

Automated E-Petitions processes include:

- ◆ Joining an E-Petition;
- ◆ A running tally of signatories for each E-Petition;
- ◆ Closure of an E-Petition in accordance with its closing date. (This involves the information moving from the Current E-Petitions listing to Closed E-Petitions, and the format of the individual E-Petition moving from the Current E-Petition to the Closed E-Petition template)
- ◆ Deletion of the personal information (ie name, address, email) of an E-Petition's signatories after an email response to its signatories has been generated (E-Petitions Data Retention Policy); and
- ◆ User evaluation and feedback of Web Site and E-Petitions system.

E-Petition manual processes outside of the system include:

- ◆ Processes prior to publishing an E-Petition online; and
- ◆ Processes involved with tabling an E-Petition outside of updating the status of the Closed E-Petition through the E-Petitions Administration Interface.
- ◆ Dealing with feedback and e-petition surveys

Neil Laurie

There have been human resource implications for the Parliamentary Service. As explained above the processes are not completely automated and require some data input etc. It is, however, apparent that the major resource implication for ongoing maintenance is **not** the maintenance of E-Petitions itself, which is mostly automated, but the posting of ministerial responses. A detailed assessment of time is being undertaken, and there are large fluctuations and many variables, but total maintenance is currently estimated at between .25 and .4 of a full-time equivalent (FTE).

Conclusion -Evaluation thus far

The usage of the Petitions Web site (including E-Petitions) and its operational impact is being monitored for 12 months - the trial period. The E-Democracy Unit is monitoring usage frequency and other user information (including demographics and their feedback relating to electronic petitions) over the course of the trial. Several mechanisms are built into the Petitions Web Site to assist with the gathering of this information, including web statistics, feedback and online surveys.

Feedback to date has been very positive, with very few technical or other problems encountered. The tables below provide an overview of the sort of information gathered to date – (the period 26 August 2002 – 31 July 2003). The tables reveal that E-Petitions are only totaling about 21% of all petitions and 9% of all signatures. However, it is submitted that this is a relatively good achievement in less than one year of operation.

A major outcome of the entire process has been the increased responsiveness to petitions generally. Each month the percentage of petitions being responded to by Ministers grows. Currently 75% of petitions have received responses during the period. This is much higher than in previous years. The higher profile of responses on the website – or to be more correct, the absence of any response – is likely to be the reason for this increase in ministerial responses.

It is emphasised that the E-Petitions process is a complimentary process to the traditional petitioning process. E-Petitions add to the democratic process and aims to increase public participation in parliamentary processes by using new technologies. From this point of view it is unobjectionable.

E-Petitions

Current	Closed (to be tabled))	Closed and tabled	Total	Average no. of signatures Tabled E-Petitions	Total signatures	No. of Ministerial Responses
10	2	14	26	465	7,701	13

Tabled Paper Petitions

No. Tabled	Average no. of Signatures	Total signatures	No. of Ministerial Responses
94	850	79,867	77

Web Statistics

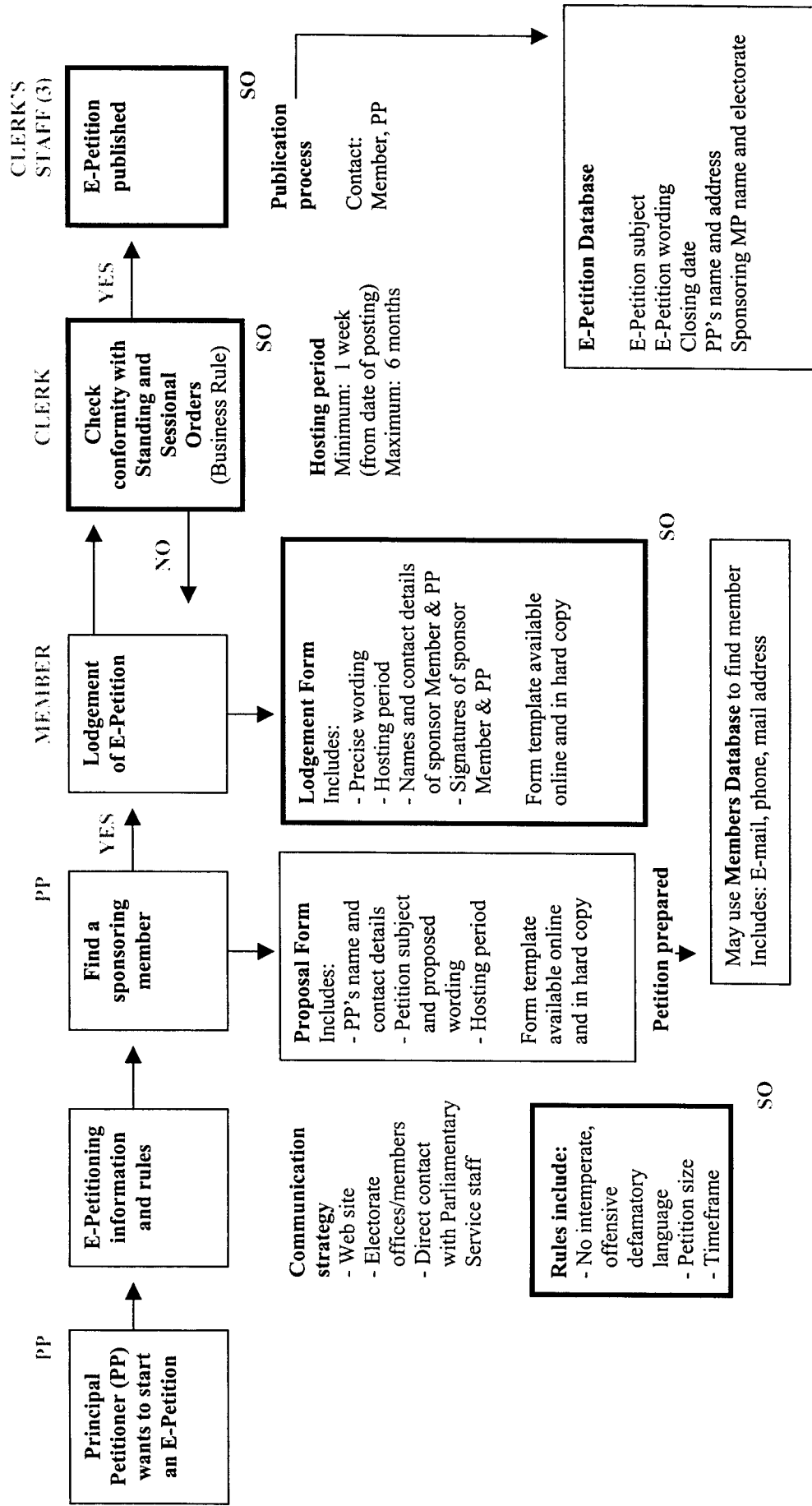
Total Hits	Total Visitors	Three Top Visitor Countries (excl. Aust)	Top referring sites
60,293	7,217	United Kingdom	Parliament
		Japan	Department of Premier Cabinet
		New Zealand	www.getinvolved

Online Surveys/Feedback

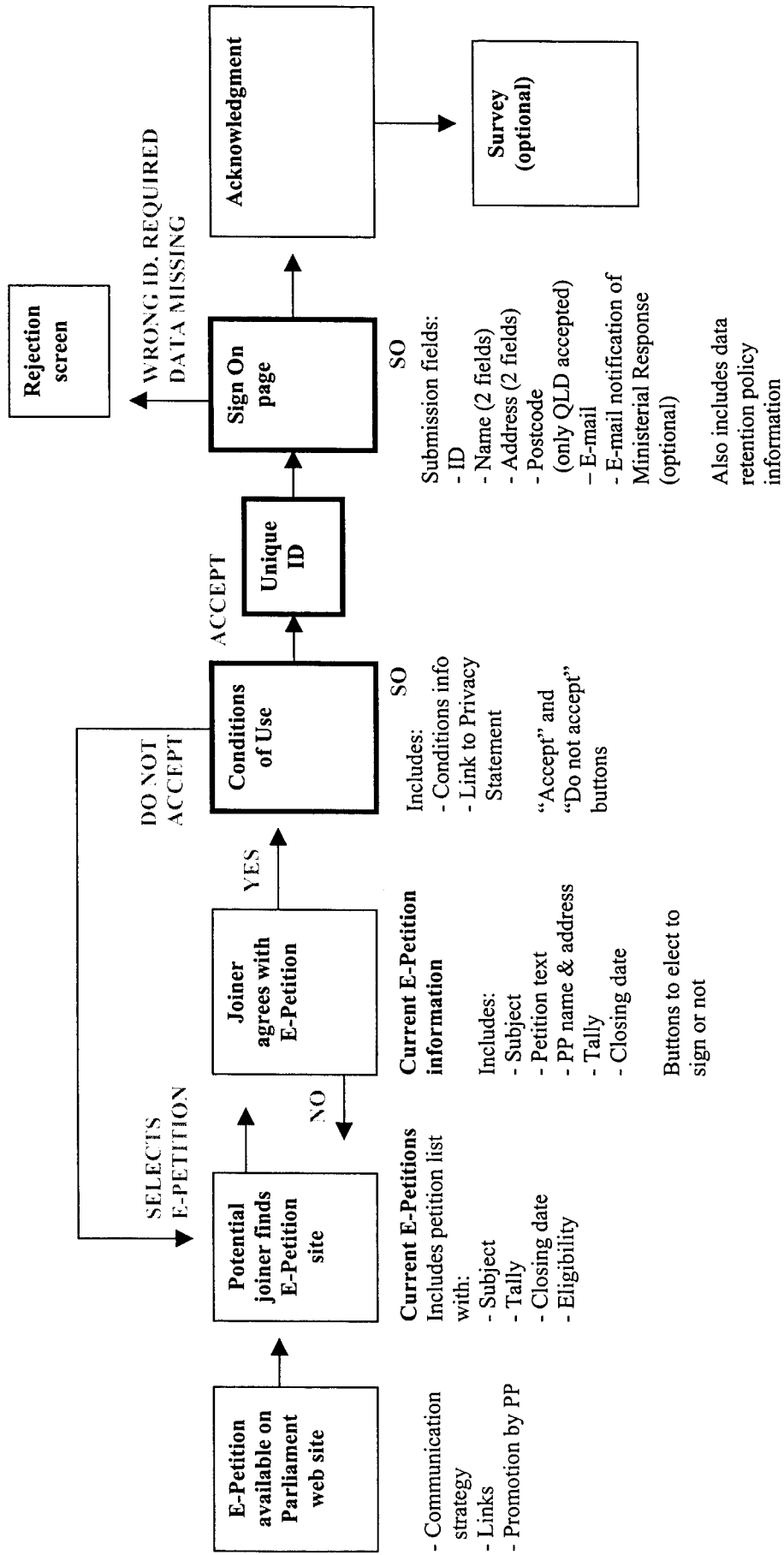
Joiners Survey	Other Feedback
118	13

Subject of E-petitions	Signatures Collected to date	Date Opened	Period Open for Joining
Lowering the voting age	14	23/07/2003	6 months
Horse racing cutbacks in regional and remote Queensland	65	19/06/2003	3.5 months
Maroon - Queensland's State colour	88	04/06/2003	5 months
Ethical stem cell research	36	03/06/2003	5 months
Double jeopardy (Deidre's law)	95	17/04/2003	6 months
Tax on bores, dams and water harvesting	96	28/04/2003	6.5 months
Removal of accused's right for silence	82	11/04/2003	6 months
General agreement on trade in services (GATS)	328	10/03/2003	6 months
Lower class sizes for Queensland schools	335	28/05/2003	2 months
Landholders' property rights	65	28/05/2003	2 months
Land clearing in Queensland and Australia	400	17/02/2003	3 months
Protection and preservation of Miami bushland comprising of Lot 612 and Lot 683 in RP4259	107	14/03/03	6.5 weeks
Stolen Wages	710	13/01/03	3 months
Controlling land clearing in Queensland	1952	31/10/02	5 months
Ban on recreational duck and quail shooting	525	29/10/02	5 months
Container deposit legislation which is a refundable deposit on containers	444	18/09/02	6 months
Proportionate liability	142	20/02/03	2 weeks
School air conditioning	213	8/11/02	4 months
Upgrading Mackay-Bucasia Road to four lanes between Eimeo Mackay-Habana Road	27	11/11/02	4 months
Education and training reforms	64	15/11/02	11 weeks
Proposed seas cage fish farms in Moreton Bay Marine Park	250	26/11/02	1 month
No nuclear irradiation, no food irradiation	429	17/10/02	7 weeks
Proposed seas cage fish farms in Moreton Bay Marine Park	1108	2/10/02	1 month
Objection to Powerlink high voltage powerline proposal from Milmerran to Middle Ridge	126	12/09/02	5 weeks

OPENING AN E-PETITION

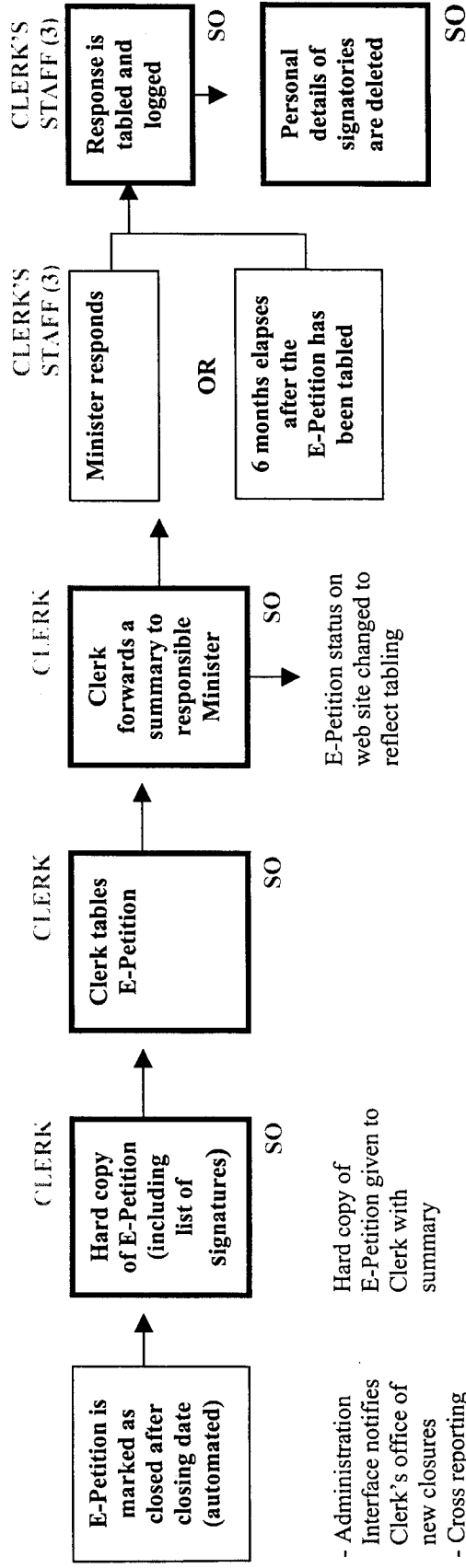


JOINING AN E-PETITION



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CLOSING AN E-PETITION



- Administration Interface notifies Clerk's office of new closures
- Cross reporting

Closed E-Petitions list

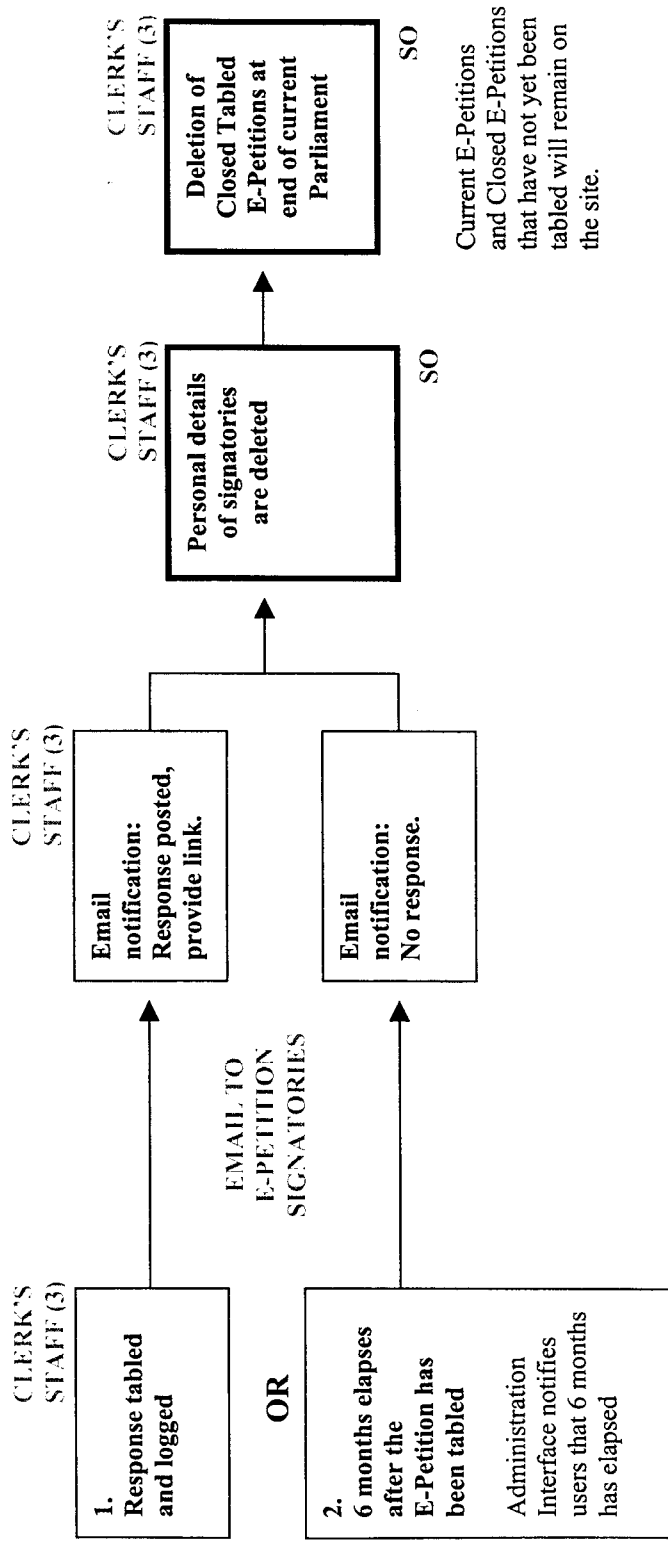
Includes: Subject, Tally, Closing date, Eligibility and Status

Closed E-Petition

Includes: Subject, Wording, Tally, Closing date, Eligibility, Status, PP's name & address, Sponsoring Member name & electorate

Neil Laurie

DISPOSAL OF DETAILS AND DELETION OF AN E-PETITION



CHAPTER XVI - PETITIONS

219. Types of petitions

The House recognises two types of petitions:

- (a) Paper petitions; and
- (b) Electronic petitions ("E-Petitions").

220. Paper petitions

A paper petition is a petition:

- (a) in the correct form, stating a grievance and containing a request for action by the House;
- (b) fairly written or printed, and free from erasures and interlineations;
- (c) physically signed by at least one person on the sheet on which the petition is written or printed;
- (d) lodged by a Member with the Clerk for presentation to the House.

221. Electronic petition ("E-Petition")

(1) An e-petition is a petition:

- (a) in the correct form, stating a grievance and containing a request for action by the House;
- (b) sponsored by a Member and lodged with the Clerk for publication on the Parliament's Internet Website for a nominated period ("posted period");
- (c) persons may elect to indicate their support of ("join the petition") by electronically providing their name, address (including postcode) and signifying their intention to join the petition.

(2) 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 Parliament's Internet Website.

(3) The member sponsoring the 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.

(4) Once published on the Parliament's Internet Website an e-petition cannot be altered.

(5) Only one e-petition dealing with substantially the same grievance and requesting substantially the same action by the House shall be published on the Parliament's Internet Website at the same time.

(6) 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 House in the name of the Member that sponsored the e-petition.

(7) An e-petition published on the Parliament's Internet Website, but not presented to the House prior to the dissolution of the Parliament, shall be presented to the subsequent Parliament and becomes a petition of the subsequent Parliament.

(8) An e-petition cannot be sponsored after the dissolution of the Parliament and until the new Parliament has been summoned and members sworn.

222. Correct form for all petitions

(1) All petitions shall be in the following correct form—

"PETITION

TO: The Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland.

The Petition of

- (a) citizens of Queensland
- or
- (b) residents of the State of Queensland
- or
- (c) electors of the Division of ...

draws to the attention of the House

(State Grievance)

Your petitioners, therefore request the House to

(State action required)

Name and address of principal petitioner

(Here follows the Signatures)

- (2) The text of the grievance and action required in each petition shall not exceed 250 words in total.

223. General Rules for Petitions

- (1) A petition shall be in the English language, or if in another language shall be accompanied by an English translation, certified by the member who sponsors or lodges it to be a true and correct translation.
- (2) A petition of a company must be made under its common seal (if the company has a common seal).
- (3) Letters, affidavits, or other documents may not be attached to a petition.
- (4) A petition must be respectful, decorous and temperate and not contain any unparliamentary language or otherwise offend any rule or practice of the House.
- (5) Application shall not be made by a petition for any grant of public money, nor for compounding debts due to the Crown, nor for the remission of duties payable by any person, unless it is first recommended by the Governor.
- (6) In respect of paper petitions, signatures shall be written upon the petition itself, and not pasted upon it, or otherwise affixed or transferred to it.
- (7) Persons must sign paper petitions by their names or marks, and by no one else, except in case of incapacity from sickness.
- (8) 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.
- (9) A person cannot sign or join the same paper petition or e-petition more than once.
- (10) The correct form of the petition (including the name and address of the principal petitioner) must appear on each page of the petition to be presented to the House.

224. Presentation of petitions to the House

- (1) At the appointed time in the order of business of the House the Speaker will ask the Clerk to read the list of petitions lodged.
- (2) Every petition presented to the House in accordance with (1) is deemed to have been received by the House unless a motion that it not be received is moved immediately and agreed to.

225. Duties and powers of the Clerk and Speaker regarding petitions

- (1) The Clerk may return a paper petition not in conformity with these Orders to the member who lodged the petition.
- (2) The Clerk may decline to publish an e-petition on the Parliament's Internet Website not in conformity with these Orders and advise the sponsoring member accordingly.
- (3) The Clerk or a member may seek a ruling from the Speaker about the conformity of any petition with these Orders.
- (4) The Clerk shall ensure that the details of all petitions, together with all ministerial responses received are published on the Parliament's Internet Website. The details may be removed after the dissolution of each Parliament.
- (5) The Clerk is authorised to create and maintain an appropriate Internet Website on which to publish electronic petitions, paper petitions, responses to petitions and explanatory information and do all things necessary in order to give effect to these Orders.
- (6) 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 House.
- (7) The Clerk or their delegate is authorised to inquire into and verify with petitioners the details provided on any petition and remove from the petition any entry that the Clerk, on the basis of his inquiries, has reasonable grounds to suspect is fraudulent. The Clerk may report the matter to the House.

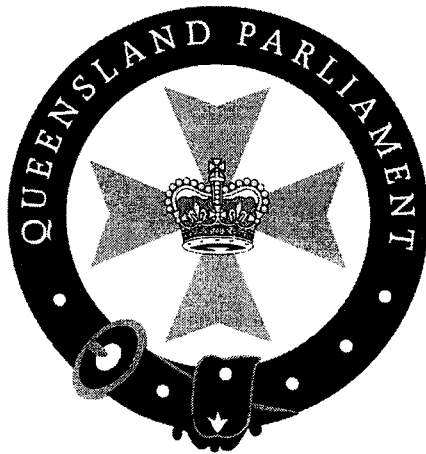
226. Instructions to members lodging or sponsoring petitions

- (1) A member lodging a paper petition shall place their name and signature at the beginning of that petition and indicate the number of petitioners.
- (2) A member lodging or sponsoring a petition shall take care that it is in conformity with these Orders.

- (3) A member cannot lodge or sponsor their own petition.
- (4) If a member desires a paper petition to be presented on a particular sitting day, the member must lodge the petition with the Clerk of the Parliament at least two hours prior to the time set for the commencement of the meeting of the House on that sitting day.

227. Petitions referred to a Minister and responses tabled and published

- (1) The Clerk shall refer a copy of the material parts of every petition presented to and received by the House to the Minister responsible for the administration of the matter which is the subject of the petition.
- (2) The Minister may forward the Clerk's advice to another Minister for response.
- (3) The Minister may forward a response ("ministerial response") to a petition to the Clerk and the Clerk shall:
 - (a) table the response;
 - (b) forward a copy of the response to the member who presented the petition;
 - (c) ensure the response is printed in Hansard; and
 - (d) ensure the response is published on the Parliament's Internet Website.
- (4) If the House is not sitting when the Clerk receives a ministerial response to a petition, the response is deemed to be tabled when it is received by the Clerk.
- (5) The details of all ministerial responses to petitions received by the Clerk and deemed to be tabled and the day they are received by the Clerk must be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings on the next sitting day.



E-Petitions

A trial of online petitioning

Information and guidelines

E-Petitions trial

Petitioning is one of the traditional methods by which members of the public can make a formal request to the Parliament. Until now, petitions have only been possible in paper form.

The Queensland Parliament, with the support of the Queensland Government, is conducting a trial of online petitioning. Petitions submitted in electronic format will be referred to as "E-Petitions".

Information on E-Petitions is available on the Queensland Parliament web site at www.parliament.qld.gov.au. You can locate E-Petitions, and if you wish join a current E-Petition, through this web site. If a Minister responds to an E-Petition you will also be able to read the response on the web site.

E-Petitions and paper petitions

E-Petitions will not replace the paper petition process.

If you wish to start a petition you can now 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. The people who can petition the Queensland Parliament, as set out in the Queensland Parliament's Sessional Orders (QPSO), is quite broad, and includes:

- Queensland residents;
- Queensland citizens; or
- Queensland electors [the relevant electorate will be specified on the petition].

The Principal Petitioner will identify who may have an interest in, and may want to support, the petition. The group of eligible petitioners will be identified on the web site.

How are E-Petitions started?

Step One: Approach a Queensland Member of Parliament (MP) 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 MP as the first step. (Paper petitions are usually circulated for signatures prior to locating a sponsoring MP. Only an MP can present the petition to the Parliament.)

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

Information on how to contact MPs is available through Parliament's web site at www.parliament.qld.gov.au or you can contact the Queensland Parliament for this information on 07 3406 7250.

Step Two: Complete an E-Petition request form.

An E-Petition request form is included with this brochure and is also available on Parliament's web site. You may choose to use this form when seeking an MP 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. Queensland residents;
- the period the E-Petition will be on the web site;
- the sponsoring MP's details; and
- the Principal Petitioner's details.

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

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

Step Three: The MP then submits the signed E-Petition request form to the Clerk of the Parliament.

The Clerk of the Parliament will check that it meets the requirements set out in the QPSO. If these requirements are satisfied, the E-Petition is posted on the web site until the specified closing date.

How long can an E-Petition be posted on the web site?

All current E-Petitions will be accessible from the web site. An E-Petition can be posted on the web site for a minimum period of 1 week and a maximum period of 6 months.

The Principal Petitioner, together with the sponsoring MP, will 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 will be 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 web site.)

The Queensland Parliament'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 passed, the E-Petition will be made available in hard-copy format for presenting in Parliament. The Clerk of the Parliament will present the petition in the sponsoring MP's name at the first available opportunity.

Will Ministers respond to E-Petitions in Parliament?

Under the QPSO, the Minister to whom the petition is sent may present a response to the Parliament. These responses are also recorded in Hansard. However, Ministers are not obliged to respond to petitions in Parliament.

In the case of E-Petitions, should a Minister present a response to the Parliament, the response will also be posted on the web site at www.parliament.qld.gov.au You will be given the option when you join an E-Petition to be automatically notified by email that a response to the petition is available online.

Conditions of Use

If you wish to join an E-Petition, you will need to accept the E-Petition's *Conditions of Use*, which outlines:

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

A breach of the *Conditions of Use* may amount to contempt of Parliament under the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*. Actions that are considered to be in contempt of Parliament include:

- presenting a forged or falsified document to the House 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 House.

You could be fined for committing a contempt of Parliament or even imprisoned if you fail to pay such a fine.

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 post code) and email address.

What about privacy?

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

The personal details of people who join E-Petitions will not be published in any form on the web site. The web site will only show a tally of the number of signatures collected. However, the details of all petitions presented to Parliament (including the names, addresses and email addresses of signatories) may be accessed from the Parliament's Table Office.

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



E-Petition request form

This form may be used when seeking to obtain a Member of Parliament's sponsorship of a proposed E-Petition for posting on the Queensland Parliament web site.

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

Member of Parliament's Details*: (to be completed by Principal Petitioner)

Name

Address

Postcode

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

Name

Address

Postcode

Note: The name and address of the Principal Petitioner will be published on the web site in accordance with the Sessional Orders of the Queensland Parliament.

Telephone (office hours)

Email

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

Subject

Eligibility Category (circle appropriate category below)

Queensland Citizens/Queensland Residents/Electors of

(state Division)

draws to the attention of the House (state the text of grievance):

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

Number of words

(word limit of 250 in total for grievance and action required)

Closing date

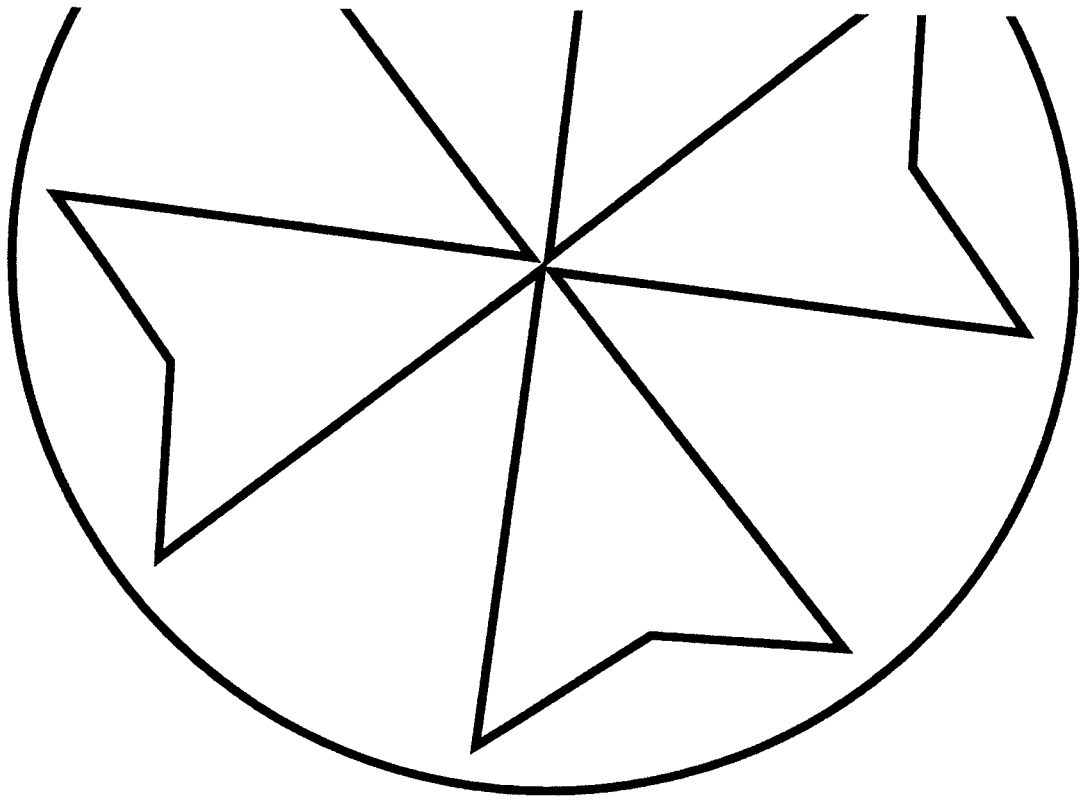
(posting period minimum 1 week/maximum 6 months from date of posting)

Signature

Date: / /

Note: The Member of Parliament's office will contact you to advise of the outcome of your request. If the MP 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.

* The contact details for MPs are available from the Queensland Parliament at www.parliament.qld.gov.au or on (07) 3406 7250.



E-Petition request form

Member of Parliament's Details*: (to be completed by the MP - the completed form is then to be forwarded to the Office of the Clerk of the Parliament)

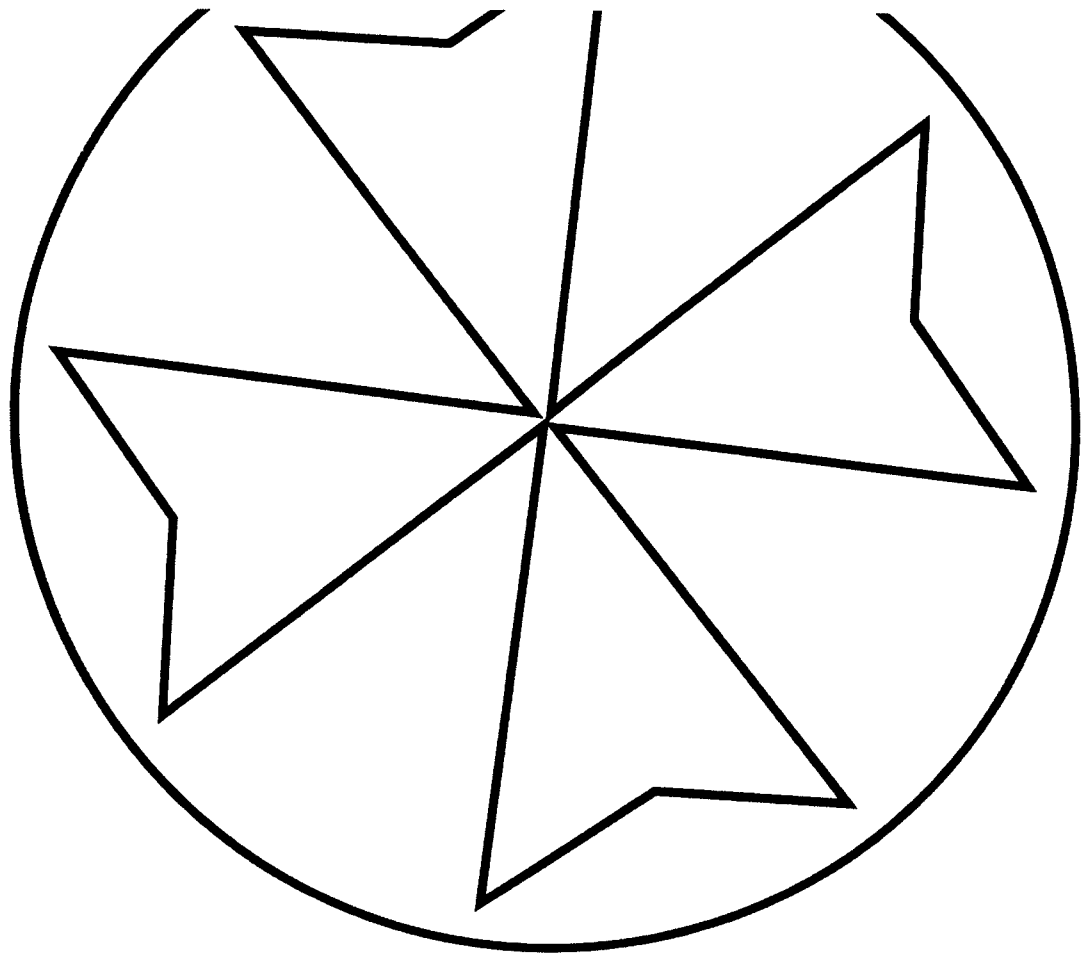
Name

Electorate

I agree to sponsor the petition overleaf

Signature

Date: / /



Evaluation of E-Petitions

E-Petitions will be trialed by the Queensland Parliament with the support of the Queensland Government. There will be an ongoing evaluation of E-Petitions and you will be able to provide your views through feedback tools available on the Queensland Parliament web site at www.parliament.qld.gov.au Alternatively, you can contact the Community Engagement Division within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet on:

Telephone 07 3224 5592 **Postal** PO Box 185 Brisbane Albert Street QLD 4002

Facsimile 07 3224 5123 **Email** e-democracy@premiers.qld.gov.au

Note: This publication is for information purposes only. Further information about the E-Petitions process can be obtained from the Queensland Parliament on:

Telephone 07 3406 7250 **Facsimile** 07 3221 7475

E-Petitions is one of three “e-democracy” commitments made by the Queensland Government. Further information about the Queensland Government’s E-Democracy Policy Framework and commitments can be found at www.qld.gov.au/edemocracy

A Smart State initiative

