



## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

### Parliamentary Committees - Guidelines for the preparation of submissions

#### INTRODUCTION

THE ROLE OF Parliamentary Committees is to investigate matters on behalf of the Legislative Assembly and to report the findings of those investigations to the Assembly.

Each Committee inquiry has Terms of Reference which set the parameters of matters to be considered by the Committee.

Parliamentary Committees are comprised of Members of the Legislative Assembly who are Government, Opposition and Independent Members. Committees are extensions of Parliament and operate according to the authority delegated to them.

A Committee's effectiveness depends on obtaining information from individuals, organisations, government agencies and advice from experts on matters relating to the inquiry. This information is obtained through public submissions, either written or oral, as well as in hearings where evidence is taken from witnesses appearing before the Committee.

For a submission to be effective, content and format should be considered. This document is intended to assist those wishing to present a submission to produce it in a form that is easily read and will assist the Committee in its deliberations.

#### WHAT IS A SUBMISSION?

A SUBMISSION IS THE presentation of views or opinions on a matter under consideration by a Parliamentary Committee. Submissions should address some or all of the Terms of Reference, which can be found on the Legislative Assembly web site:

[www.nt.gov.au/lant/committees](http://www.nt.gov.au/lant/committees)

Submissions are normally received in written form (e-mail is preferable), and they can be reinforced by oral evidence to the Committee. By writing a submission or giving evidence, you are providing the committee with your own expertise, insights, observations and opinions.

When a Committee reports to the Legislative Assembly, the submissions received as part of the inquiry form part of the report and are published. Once tabled, the report (including submissions) becomes a public document available for inspection by any member of the public. Reports are both printed and posted on the Legislative Assembly web site.

#### WHO CAN MAKE A SUBMISSION?

ANY INDIVIDUAL OR organisation may make a submission to a Parliamentary Committee.

#### CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

WHEN A COMMITTEE decides to seek submissions, it usually places advertisements on the Legislative Assembly web site and in relevant newspapers. Advertisements include: the name of the inquiry for which submissions are sought; the name of the Committee considering the matter; the Terms of Reference for the inquiry; the date by and address to which submissions should be sent; and the name and telephone number of the Secretary to the Committee.

A Committee may also directly invite submissions from individuals or organisations with expertise in the area under consideration.

#### HOW TO WRITE A SUBMISSION

WHILE THERE IS NO set format for a submission to a Committee, you should aim to present your submission in a way that is ordered and easily understood. The following suggestions may help you.

##### Heading

Head your submission with the name of the Committee to which it is addressed and the full title of the inquiry.

##### Who is it from?

Clearly state from whom the submission comes. State your name or the name of the organisation you represent. Include a contact address, phone number and e-mail address.

##### Appearing before the Committee

Clearly indicate whether you wish to address the Committee in person. If you wish others to appear with you, either in support or to speak in their own right, include their names and positions if they represent an organisation.

Evidence to a Parliamentary Committee is sworn or affirmed, just as it is in a court of law. Evidence to a Parliamentary Committee must be accurate and truthful. Failure to comply with these rules of evidence could give rise to a charge of contempt of Parliament.

##### Representing an organisation

If you are preparing a submission on behalf of an organisation, give brief details about the organisation's aims. Ensure that you have the authority to represent the organisation and provide details of your position within the organisation.

## Who else supports you?

If appropriate, note how widely you have consulted during the writing of the submission.

## LAYOUT OF SUBMISSION

SUBMISSION LAYOUT is important. The following guidelines are provided to help you prepare an effective written submission.

Where possible, your submission should be typed on white A4 paper. Submissions may be accompanied by other material (ie photographic evidence in support of a claim). Submissions may be sent via e-mail, hand-written and posted, on a CD or a DVD.

Ensure that written submissions have adequate margins down both sides of the paper.

Use headings and group your paragraphs under those in order to achieve a structured submission.

## SUBMISSION ESSENTIALS

FIVE PRINCIPLES APPLY to the content of a submission, regardless of the subject of the Committee's inquiry:

**Accuracy** - be accurate and complete. Include all relevant information. Ensure your facts are correct. An error-ridden submission will have little credibility.

**Brevity** - be simple and direct. Committee Members want to know what you think and the evidence or arguments that support your view.

**Clarity** - arrange your sentences and paragraphs in a logical order. Present a clear and logically developed argument.

**Relevance** - your submission must be relevant to the matter(s) before the Committee, so ensure that you address some or all of the Terms of Reference. A Committee may decide not to accept a submission it considers irrelevant.

**Conclusion** - restate your recommendations in the conclusion of the submission *or* in an Executive Summary at the beginning.

## SENDING A SUBMISSION

SUBMISSIONS SHOULD BE forwarded to the Committees Secretariat by the closing date. Submissions may be e-mailed to the Committee Secretary, and this is the preferred form of receipt. Address your submission to:

*Name of the Committee*  
Committees Secretariat  
Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory  
GPO Box 3721  
DARWIN NT 0801

Submissions must be signed by the author, whether the author is an individual or representing an organisation.

A return address for correspondence, a contact telephone number and e-mail address should be provided with the submission.

## PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE confers special rights and immunities on the Parliament, its Members and others who are considered essential to the operation of Parliament, including those who write submissions and give evidence. These rights and privileges allow the Parliament to conduct its business without obstruction or fear of prosecution.

With the right of Parliamentary Privilege comes a responsibility to exercise it with due care. This means that evidence before a Committee, which includes a submission, must be truthful and made in good faith. Failure to comply with these rules of evidence could give rise to a charge of contempt of parliament.

All evidence (including documents) presented to a Committee at its hearings attract Parliamentary Privilege. Notwithstanding this protection, in some circumstances, evidence to a Parliamentary Committee may be produced as evidence in a court of law.

## ORAL SUBMISSIONS

AN ORAL SUBMISSION provides you with the opportunity to reinforce your written submission and to answer any questions the Committee may have in relation to it. Once the Committee has decided to invite you to appear before it, the Secretariat will contact you to make the necessary arrangements.

At the hearing, briefly summarise the main points of your submission along with any recommendations. It is not necessary to read your submission to the Committee. If you have updated information, you may wish to inform the Committee of that information. After your presentation, Members of the Committee may question you in relation to your evidence.

See also the document entitled *Guidelines for Witnesses*.

## PUBLICATION OF SUBMISSIONS

ONCE A SUBMISSION HAS been 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 and until either the Committee or the Legislative Assembly has authorised its publication.

On receipt of a submission, a Committee decides whether to accept the submission and authorise its publication.

Copies of submissions authorised for publication are usually available from the Legislative Assembly web site. Hard copies of submissions can be requested from the Committees Secretariat.

The author of a submission may request that all or part of the submission remain confidential. This should be clearly indicated at the front of the submission. You may consider presenting any confidential information in an appendix to the submission to allow the body of the submission to be published. The Committee will consider individual requests for confidentiality, but retains the authority to publish any submission.

## CHECKLIST

BEFORE LODGING YOUR submission, you may find it helpful to consider the following checklist:

- Have I address some or all the Terms of Reference?
- Have I provided a summary of the submission at the beginning of it?
- If the submission contains confidential information, have I made that clear in the beginning?
- Have I indicated whether or not I wish to appear before the Committee?
- Have I provided correct contact details?
- Can I make the submission electronic?