



NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEDIA RELEASE

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More voices to be heard in the NSW Upper House with new, digital petitions

Petitioning the NSW Upper House has never been easier, with a new digital petitioning platform launched this week at www.bit.ly/e-petitioning.

The President of the NSW Legislative Council, Matthew Mason-Cox, said the introduction of 'ePetitions' will help bring the people of NSW closer to their parliament.

"Lodging a petition with the Upper House allows members of the public to officially raise issues with the parliament, and to suggest that we take certain actions," Mr Mason-Cox said. "It's the only direct way to do so, and an important democratic right. By going digital, we're opening the petitioning process up, making it simpler, and hopefully encouraging more people to get involved."

Now an option alongside the traditional pen-and-clipboard approach, digital petitions can be created or signed by any resident of NSW using a name and email address.

"It's easy to share an ePetition far and wide, and with a simple link it can be signed by people right across the state," said Mr Mason-Cox. "It's also a secure platform. The details of people who have signed remain confidential, and the email information is only used to keep people up to date with their petition's progress."

And just how does a petition progress? Once an Upper House petition closes, it's presented to the Legislative Council by a member of the House (a person nominated by the original petitioner). It's also provided directly to the relevant government minister for their consideration, with the minister required to table a formal response in the House if the petition has more than 500 signatures.

"Petitions allow community voices to be heard," said Mr Mason-Cox. "We've had close to 50 petitions presented since the start of this 57th session of parliament, and I hope that with the digital gates now thrown open, we continue to see many more."

For more on the process, including how to start your own ePetition, visit www.bit.ly/about-e-petitioning. As new ePetitions are created, a list of petitions able to be signed digitally will also be available from this link.

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MEDIA CONTACTS

For general queries about ePetitions, contact Legislative Council Communications Officer Lauren Monaghan on 0428 411 148 or lauren.monaghan@parliament.nsw.gov.au

For the Office of the President (interviews available), contact Communications Director Norm Lipson on 0456 837 178

***[Image available here](#)



NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BACKGROUNDER

BACKGROUNDER: Additional information for media on ePetitions and the NSW Upper House

An overview of the ePetitions process for the NSW Upper House

- 1. Any resident of NSW can start an Upper House ePetition** via the NSW Parliament website at www.bit.ly/e-petitioning. Petitions must be relevant to the powers of parliament – for example, relating to state legislation.
- 2. As part of creating an ePetition**, the petitioner must nominate five people to first indicate their support for the petition. They must also nominate a member of the Upper House, who needs to agree to present the completed petition to the parliament. When these criteria are met, the petition is published on the NSW Parliament website at www.bit.ly/about-e-petitioning.
- 3. Once live, an ePetition can collect signatures** for one, three or 12 weeks – a timeframe set by the petition creator. The ePetition can be shared online. To sign it, members of the community must provide their name, email address, and confirm they are a resident of NSW. ePetition signatories are kept updated on the progress of the petition via email, unless they opt out.
- 4. When the ePetition closes it is tabled in the Legislative Council** (Upper House), and a copy is provided to the relevant government minister. A response is required from the minister within 35 days if there are more than 500 signatures.

While a petition can put an issue on the House's radar, there is no guarantee the parliament will take action. If a member or minister does choose to pursue the petition's issue or request, there may be relevant motions debated in the House.

How ePetitions have been introduced

Until now, the Legislative Council's 'standing orders' (the official rules of the Upper House) have allowed for only paper petitions to be accepted – that is, petitions created "in ink", with written signatures. In October, the House officially agreed to accept petitions in a digital format, via the ePetitions platform. This was achieved through the adoption of a new 'sessional order', which is a rule that modifies or replaces an existing order for the duration of the current session of parliament.

More about the NSW Upper House

The Legislative Council is the Upper House of the NSW Parliament, and the oldest legislative body in Australia. Often called the 'House of Review', the Upper House has a critical role to play in scrutinising legislation and holding the government of the day to account – not just through activity in the chamber, but through a robust committee system responsible for conducting parliamentary inquiries.

There are 42 members of the Upper House, including the President. Members represent the entire state, not geographical electorates, and there is diverse representation across the political spectrum. Currently there are 17 government members (11 from the Liberal Party, six from The Nationals); 14 members from the Australian Labor Party; three from The Greens; two members each from the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, Pauline Hanson's One Nation and the Animal Justice Party; one Christian Democratic Party representative; and one independent member.

More information is available from www.parliament.nsw.gov.au.