
Making a Submission to a Parliamentary Select Committee



Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives
Parliament House, Wellington, New Zealand

2000

About this booklet

New Zealand's system of parliamentary democracy not only provides for citizens to elect their representatives, but also allows citizens to have a say in shaping the laws that affect them. This involvement is achieved by the select committees of the House of Representatives receiving submissions from the public. The system of public input into legislative proposals is an important element in the parliamentary process and in the democratic life of the country. Submissions are also received on parliamentary inquiries and other matters before a select committee. This provides the public with the opportunity to put forward its views on issues and may ultimately result in new laws.

For public submissions to be effective, content and format are factors that need to be considered carefully. This booklet is designed to help those writing a submission to a select committee to produce it in a form that is easily read and understood by members of the committee. This will enable a submission to be more effective and for its recommendations or suggestions to have a greater impact on the committee. The booklet also covers how to present an oral submission, details natural justice provisions applicable to select committees, and provides general information on select committees.

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What is a submission?

A submission is the presentation of views or opinions on a matter currently under consideration by a select committee. Submissions are normally received in written form, and they can be reinforced through oral presentation to the committee. By writing or presenting a submission, you are providing the committee with your own insights, observations and opinions. The reasons that you provide for any proposed changes that you believe should be made, or proposed actions you believe should be taken, will give validity to your submission. Submissions may be presented in English or Māori.

Calling for submissions

When a committee decides to seek submissions, it usually has advertisements placed in the public notices column of the major daily, or relevant local newspapers. The advertisement will state:

- the name of the bill or inquiry for which submissions are sought
- the name of the committee that is considering the matter
- where the inquiry's terms of reference can be obtained (for an inquiry)
- where and by what date submissions should be sent
- the name and telephone number of the Clerk of the Committee.

How to write a submission

While there is no set format that a submission to a select committee should take, you should aim to present your submission in a way that is both ordered and easy to read. The following are suggestions that will help you achieve this. A suggested format is included on page 14. You should include the following information.

- **Heading** - Head your submission with the name of the select committee to which it is addressed and the full title of the bill or inquiry.
- **Who is it from?** - Clearly state who the submission is from. State your name or give the name of the organisation you are representing. Include a contact address and daytime telephone number. If for privacy reasons you do not wish these details to be publicly released with your submission, please include this information in a covering letter and leave it off the submission itself.

- **Whether you wish to appear before a committee** - Clearly indicate whether you would like the opportunity to speak to the committee in person. If you wish to appear before the committee include, with your name, your daytime telephone number. If you wish others to appear with you before the committee, either in support or to speak, include their names and designations if representing an organisation.
- **Your organisation** - If you are writing for an organisation, give brief details of the organisation's aims, membership and structure. Make sure that you have the authority to do so and note your position within the organisation.
- **Who else supports you?** - Note how widely you have consulted during the writing of the submission.

Layout of your submission

Submission layout is very important. The following guidelines are designed to assist you in preparing a more effective submission. See suggested format on page 14.

- **Typed if possible** - Where possible, your submission should be typed on one side of white A4 size paper. Hand written submissions are quite acceptable, but may have less impact and can be difficult to read.
- **Page spacing** - Provide adequate margins down both sides of the paper and spacing between paragraphs.
- **Use headings and paragraphs** - Use headings and group your paragraphs under them. Numbering your paragraphs can be helpful.
- **Number pages** - Number each page clearly.
- **Staple together** - Staple the pages together in the top left-hand corner.

Content of your submission

When writing a submission to a select committee, you will usually be making comments in relation to a bill or inquiry. While there are differences in the way in which a submission is written for a bill or inquiry, there are five basic principles that apply to both.

- **Relevant** - Your submission must be relevant to the matter before the committee. A committee may decide not to receive a submission it considers not relevant.

- **Clear** - Arrange your sentences and paragraphs in a logical order. Present a clear and logically developed argument. A submission that jumps from one issue to another and back again or jumbles unrelated issues together may confuse members and decrease its impact.
- **Concise** - Be simple and direct. Do not write more than is necessary. An overly long submission may prove too long for members to consider fully. They want to know what you think and the evidence or arguments you have that support your view.
- **Accurate** - Be accurate and complete. Include all relevant information. It will only confuse the committee if in your submission you refer to evidence or information that is not included. Make sure your facts are correct. An error-ridden submission will greatly reduce its impact and credibility.
- **Conclusion** - Restate your recommendations in a conclusion at the end of the submission or an executive summary at the beginning. You should consider listing your submission's recommendations or summing up its main points.

Writing on a bill

When writing a submission on a bill you should have a copy of that bill so you know what is being proposed. A list of bookshops that sell legislation and other government publications is at the rear of this booklet. You will then be able to focus your submission on what the bill actually contains.

- **General position** - First, state your general position on the bill, whether you support or oppose the measure being proposed, and give your reasons.
- **Detailed comments** - Having stated your general position, make more detailed comments on the clauses that are of concern to you. If you feel that certain clauses need to be changed, say so, and give your reasons. You might also like to suggest new wording for the clauses that you feel ought to be changed. Using clauses, as ordered in the bill, is a good way to organise your submission.

Writing for an inquiry

Writing a submission for an inquiry is different from writing a submission on a bill. As there are no specific clauses to comment on, use the terms of reference of the inquiry as a guide to presenting your views. You may then

like to list any specific recommendations that you wish the committee to consider. It is essential to have a copy of the inquiry's terms of reference to assist you in preparing your submission.

Sending your submission

Select committees require 20 copies of each submission. This enables each member of the committee and committee officials to have a copy. Copies are also required for the committee's records, the news media and the Parliamentary Library. All copies should be sent together to the Clerk of the Committee before the closing date for submissions.

Address your submission to:

Clerk of the Committee

_____ **Committee**

Select Committee Office

Parliament Buildings

WELLINGTON

If you have any problems meeting the closing date, telephone the Clerk of the Committee immediately so that alternative arrangements, if possible, can be made. A late submission will not necessarily be accepted.

Presenting oral submissions

Oral submissions provide you with the opportunity to reinforce what you have said in your written submission and allow the committee to clarify points raised in that submission. Once the committee has decided to hear your submission, the Clerk of the Committee will contact you to arrange the necessary details of the time and place of the meeting. Please note that notification of the meeting may be at short notice.

Before the meeting

The format for the presentation of oral submissions varies between committees and the nature of the business. As the hearing of evidence during a committee meeting is generally open to the public and the news media, you may wish to attend one of these meetings before you give

evidence yourself or to arrive early and observe other presentations. You can discuss the amount of time allotted to you with the Clerk of the Committee. It is best to discuss such matters before the meeting commences. The committee makes the final decision as to how much time is allotted to witnesses.

Prior to appearing before the committee, it is a good idea to prepare your presentation so you are able to present all relevant points and leave enough time for questions. Although committees usually work to a timetable, the time to hear a submission will vary according to circumstances and the nature of the information that the committee wants.

At the meeting

At the meeting, when the committee is ready to hear your submission, the chairperson will invite you to sit at the table and may introduce each member of the committee to you. At this stage, you should introduce yourself and those who are appearing with you, if necessary. Please note that the term 'chairperson' has superseded 'chairman' and all communication with the committee should be addressed through the chairperson.

Following the introductions, the chairperson will then ask you to speak to your submission. Briefly summarise the main points of your submission along with any recommendations. Because of time constraints and the fact that the committee will have already studied your submission, you should refrain from reading it. If there is any new information that has become available you may wish to inform the committee of it. Please provide the Clerk of the Committee with copies of any supplementary submission preferably before the meeting or when you arrive.

After your presentation

After your presentation the members of the committee will usually question you to clarify points they are uncertain about or that they feel require further examination. If there are any other people appearing with you, you may wish to call on them to answer questions.

Sometimes the committee will ask for additional information. You should forward 20 copies of each item of information requested to the Clerk of the Committee by an agreed date.

Natural justice provisions

The Standing Orders provide some protection to you when you appear as a witness before a select committee. Your rights as a witness allow you to:

- apply to have some or all of your evidence heard in private or secret, giving reasons for such an application
- raise matters of concern with the Clerk of the Committee relating to evidence you are to give
- make a written submission before appearing to give evidence
- be accompanied by and consult counsel
- object to a question on the grounds of relevance
- object on any grounds to answering a relevant question and state grounds for objection
- have the opportunity to correct errors in any transcriptions of your evidence.

The Standing Orders also provide certain protections for people where allegations made in select committee proceedings may seriously damage their reputation, whether or not that person appears as a witness. Such a person may:

- make a written submission to a committee relevant to the business before the committee
- ask that further witnesses give evidence in his or her interest
- request a copy of all information (except secret evidence) a committee possesses concerning him or her
- make a submission on proposed committee findings where his or her reputation would be seriously damaged by those findings, before a committee reports to the House
- complain of apparent bias on the part of a member.

Apparent bias occurs where a member has made an allegation of crime or expressed a concluded view on any conduct or activity of a criminal nature identifying by name or otherwise a person as being responsible for or associated with that crime, conduct or activity.

Further information on natural justice can be obtained from the Office of the Clerk. If you wish to raise any of the matters outlined above, contact the Clerk of the Committee.

What is a select committee?

Select committees are appointed by the House of Representatives to undertake business on behalf of the House. They are small select groups of members of Parliament, which derive their powers from the House and report their findings to it. Their membership reflects the balance of parties in the House and is usually eight members. Most select committees are subject select committees, but there can also be *ad hoc* select committees.

Select committee consideration allows for detailed examination of matters in a manner which would not be possible in the House. This also allows members of the public to have a direct input into the parliamentary process by making written submissions and attending public hearings. Select committees may travel within New Zealand to obtain evidence.

Committee areas of responsibility

There are 13 subject select committees and their subject areas are as follows.

- **Commerce Committee:** business development, commerce, communications, consumer affairs, energy, information technology, insurance and superannuation.
- **Education and Science Committee:** education, education review, industry training, research, science and technology.
- **Finance and Expenditure Committee:** audit of the Crown's and departmental financial statements, Government finance, revenue and taxation.
- **Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee:** customs, defence, disarmament and arms control, foreign affairs, immigration and trade.
- **Government Administration Committee:** civil defence, cultural affairs, fitness, sport and leisure, internal affairs, Pacific Island affairs, Prime Minister and Cabinet, racing, services to Parliament, State services, statistics, tourism and youth affairs.
- **Health Committee:** health.
- **Justice and Electoral Committee:** Crown legal and drafting services, electoral, justice and privacy matters.
- **Law and Order Committee:** corrections, courts, police, and serious fraud.

- **Local Government and Environment Committee:** conservation, environment and local government.
- **Māori Affairs Committee:** Māori affairs.
- **Primary Production Committee:** agriculture, biosecurity, fisheries, forestry, lands and land information.
- **Social Services Committee:** housing, senior citizens, social welfare, veterans' affairs and work and income support.
- **Transport and Industrial Relations Committee:** accident compensation, industrial relations, labour, occupational health and safety, transport and transport safety.

Operation of select committees

The rules by which the House of Representatives operates, Standing Orders, provide for the following matters in relation to select committees.

Calling for evidence

Select Committees may request that people attend meetings to give evidence and that documents and records be produced. They can apply to the Speaker to issue a summons, if necessary, to obtain the evidence.

Hearing of submissions

Although it is normal practice to receive and consider submissions, select committees are not required to do so. It is usual for submissions to be heard in public. However, depending on the nature of the submission, committees can also hear evidence either in private or in secret. Evidence heard in private will remain confidential until the item of business (bill or inquiry) to which it relates is reported back to the House. Secret evidence, on the other hand, remains secret unless the House chooses to disclose it.

Status of submissions

While submissions can be discussed freely during their preparation, once a submission has been sent to a committee it becomes the property of that committee. Committees usually release submissions when they start hearing evidence. It is not a breach of parliamentary privilege for you to

release your submission before the committee has received it. However, such a release may be seen to be discourteous by the committee. Should you wish to release your submission, to the press for example, before it has been heard by the committee you should contact the Clerk of the Committee beforehand.

Costs

You are responsible for paying your own travel expenses to meeting venues and all other personal costs associated with presenting your submission.

Travel

Select committees may travel within New Zealand to obtain evidence and hear submissions.

Further information on select committees

Other publications in this series are:

- Effective Select Committee Membership
- Natural Justice Before Select Committees
- Making a Complaint to the Regulations Review Committee

For further information on select committees, contact:

Select Committee Office
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

Telephone: (04) 471 9999
Fax: (04) 499 0486
Internet: www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz

Suggested format

Here is a suggested submission layout which you may wish to consider copying. Your name, address and daytime telephone number could be included in a covering letter instead.

Date	Page number
SUBMISSION	
To the	Committee
on the	Bill/Inquiry
Introduction	
1. This submission is from (<i>name of individual/organisation and address</i>).	
2. I/we wish to appear before the committee to speak to my/our submission. I can be contacted at: (<i>List your daytime contact telephone number or the name, address and contact telephone number of the contact person for your organisation if different from above. These details could be included in a covering letter instead for privacy reasons.</i>)	
I/we wish that the following also appear in support of my/our submission: (<i>List names and positions in organisation</i>).	
3. (<i>If an organisation, give brief details of your organisation's aims, membership and structure and the people consulted in the preparation of the submission.</i>)	
General/Summary (<i>if a long submission</i>)	
4. I/we support/oppose the intent of this bill because (<i>state reasons why</i>).	
I/we wish to make the following comments (<i>views on the general intent of the inquiry</i>).	
Clause * (<i>Bill</i>)	
5. I/we support/oppose the provisions of this clause because (<i>state reasons why</i>).	
Clause * (<i>Bill</i>)	
6. Although I/we agree with the general intent of this clause, I/we feel that (<i>note any changes you would like to see made and be as specific as you can suggesting new wording for the clause if you wish</i>).	
Specific comments (<i>Inquiry</i>)	
5. I/we wish to raise the following matters under terms of reference 1, terms of reference 2 etc (<i>expand on your views and give reasons for them</i>).	
Recommendations	
7. (<i>List any further recommendations or conclusions that you wish the committee to consider. You may wish to restate recommendations mentioned earlier in the text.</i>)	

BENNETTS GOVERNMENT BOOKSHOPS

AUCKLAND: Bennetts Government Bookshop, Commerce House, 360 Queen St, PO Box 5513, Wellesley St, Auckland, Ph: (09) 377-3496, Fax: (09) 377-3497.

HAMILTON: Bennetts Government Bookshop, Whitcoulls, Centreplace, Bryce St, PO Box 928, Hamilton, Ph: (07) 839-6305, Fax: (07) 834-3520.

PALMERSTON NORTH: Bennetts Bookshop, 38-42 Broadway Ave, PO Box 1820, Palmerston North, Ph: (06) 358-3009, Fax: (06) 358-2836. Bennetts University Bookshop, Massey University, Palmerston North, Ph: (06) 354-6020, Fax: (06) 354-6716.

WELLINGTON: Bennetts Government Bookshop, Bowen House, Cnr Lambton Quay & Bowen Street, PO Box 5334, Wellington, Ph: (04) 499-3433, Fax: (04) 499-3375.

CHRISTCHURCH: Bennetts Government Bookshop, Whitcoulls, 111 Cashel St, Private Bag, Christchurch, Ph: (03) 379-7142, Fax: (03) 377-2529.

DUNEDIN: Bennetts Government Bookshop, Whitcoulls Bookshop, 143 George St, PO Box 1104, Dunedin, Ph: (03) 477-8294, Fax: (03) 477-7869.

KEY STOCKISTS

BEATTIE & FORBES: PO Box 186, Cnr Hastings & Tennyson St, **Napier**, Ph: (06) 835-8968, Fax: (06) 835-8720.

BOOKS 'A' PLENTY: PO Box 806, 28 Grey St, **Tauranga**, Ph: (07) 578-6607, Fax: (07) 578-6607.

MUIRS BOOKSHOP: PO Box 156, 62 Gladstone Rd, **Gisborne**, Ph: (06) 868-4494, Fax: (06) 867-8048.

MCLEODS BOOKSELLERS: PO Box 623, Hinemoa Centre, **Rotorua**, Ph: (07) 348-5388, Fax: (07) 349-0288.

LONDON BOOKSHOP: Shop 9, Centre City, **New Plymouth**, Ph: (06) 758-8883, Fax: (06) 758-5495.

HEDLEYS BOOKSHOP: 150 Queen St, **Masterton**, Ph: (06) 378-2875, Fax: (06) 378-2670.

CHAPTERS & VERSES: 272 Stafford St, **Timaru**, Ph: (03) 688-6491, Fax: (03) 688-4436.

LONDON BOOKSHOP: 56 Cameron St, **Whangarei**, Ph: (09) 438-6316, Fax: (09) 438-5096.

LONDON BOOKSHOP: Trafalgar Square, Shopping Centre, **Wanganui**, Ph: (06) 345-5651, Fax: (06) 347-7608.

WHITCOULLS: 52-54 Esk Street, **Invercargill**, Ph: (03) 218-6063, Fax: (03) 218-3372.

