

How to write a submission

Why write a submission?

Government agencies often invite submissions from the public to collect views and to gauge community opinion on new or existing government policies or proposals, and these responses help shape the decisions of Government.

It is important that a diverse range of people and groups with different perspectives and experiences are heard, so that the government department doing the review receives adequate representation and is better informed about how the law affects people from across the community .

How do I write an effective submission?

Submissions can vary in style though should be presented in a way that is ordered and easy to read. The main thing is to be clear and concise and use strong and direct statements to put forward your case.

Your submission doesn't have to be long. Focus on what you know and leave out what you don't. Using your own words and speaking from your unique perspective is the best way to deliver a powerful submission.

However, it is important that you follow the terms of reference. The terms of reference describe the subject of the inquiry and set the boundaries. You only need to address those issues that are relevant to you.

Remember: keep your submission polite and respectful.

How to structure your submission

1. Introduce yourself

Start your submission by briefly introducing yourself or the organisation you represent. Explain why you care about the issue, and why you have taken the time to write your submission. Emphasise your personal experience or unique perspective, relevant to the Review at hand.

2. Highlight your main points

It's important to clearly signal to the Review which issues matter most to you. You don't have to address all the aspects of the law. Focus on the aspects you can and want to address.

Tip: Turn your chosen points into headings to guide your submission writing.

3. Give examples and evidence

Elaborate, drawing on your perspective, experience and evidence. This can include local examples, case studies or stories that illustrate how the law is failing, or the problems it has caused. You can also use evidence on a larger scale – think numbers and statistics – to bolster your claims.

Examples like this that support your main points are very persuasive.

4. Make recommendations

You can provide a list of recommendations for things the government can do to act on the issues you have talked about in the submission.

Remember: if you don't feel confident doing this, outlining your concerns is just as important.

5. Identify what you agree with

Outline any aspects of the policy that you do agree with. Remember there may be submissions from all sectors of the community, and other groups might want to remove aspects of the proposal that you agree with. It's important the government hears your support.

Sending your submission

Check the deadline for submissions. If you don't think you'll have enough time to write your submission, it is possible to ask the agency or department responsible by phone or email and ask for an extension. It is better to ask for an extension than not submit anything.

It is usually preferred that you lodge your submission electronically through the website. Otherwise, you can send your submission by email, post or fax.

Contact details can be found on each inquiry's webpage.

Include your details

It is important that you include your name, address and phone number with your submission. Your personal contact details will not be published with your submission.

If you are making a submission on behalf of an organisation, please indicate who has authorised it, for example, the executive committee, president or chairperson