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**Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee**

**Writing a submission**

**What is a submission?** Parliamentary inquiries are undertaken by the parliamentary committee with relevant responsibility. While the committee will seek expert advice, it will also seek the views of members of the public. This can be done through written submissions, public hearings, roundtables, forums or other community engagements.

This is an opportunity for individuals or groups to share their experience, advice and knowledge with the government.

**Why should I write one?** Information from submissions is analyzed and becomes part of the Inquiry Report which is tabled in Parliament.

Even the numbers of submissions received by the committee is seen as an indication of public awareness, anger or support of the particular topic.

The Government responds to an Inquiry Report either by presenting a written response in Parliament, or if it’s a bill inquiry, by discussing the report in parliamentary debate on the bill.

**How do I do it?** There is no set format for a submission. It can be long or short, or even in audio visual format. Each inquiry has its own Terms of Reference, and it’s critical that the submission focus on the Terms of Reference for that Inquiry only. Each Inquiry has a dedicated webpage with information about the inquiry history, closing date for submissions (including extensions), dates of public hearings (past and upcoming), Terms of Reference, media releases, committee home page and contact details for the Committee Secretariat (see link below).

The best submissions:

* clearly address some or all of the terms of reference—you do not need to address each one
* are relevant and highlight your own perspective
* are concise, generally no longer than four to five pages
* begin with a short introduction about yourself or the organisation you represent
* emphasise the key points so that they are clear
* outline not only what the issues are but how problems can be addressed, as the committee looks to submissions for ideas to make recommendations
* only include documents that directly relate to your key points
* only include information you would be happy to see published on the internet.

Submissions that include complex argument, personal details or criticise someone may take the committee longer to process and consider.

**What about my privacy?** It’s important to keep in mind that submissions are part of a common public record and are published on the Parliamentary website. Signatures and personal contact details are removed prior to publication (it’s best to include such information only in a covering letter and not in the submission itself). If you feel that you must provide the submission anonymously, you need to be clear and provide a reason when you upload or send the document.

**How do I know an inquiry is happening? How do I find Terms of Reference?** Public inquiries are considered a critical part of the democratic process. There is a lot of useful information on the Australian Parliament House website.

Place to start: <https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees>

* click either:
  + ‘Current public Inquiries’ which will include those Inquiries where submissions have closed, but the inquiry process is not concluded OR
  + ‘Open public submissions’ which are those Inquiries which are still taking submissions OR
  + ‘Upcoming public hearings’ – Inquiries where the public hearings haven’t taken place
* The Open Public Submissions aka ‘Inquiries Accepting Submission’ page lists all Senate, House and Joint Committees accepting submissions, listed by closing date.
* When you find the right inquiry (or the topic you’re interested in) click the Inquiry title and you’ll be taken to the dedicated page for that Inquiry.
* The page will give you:
  + Closing date for submissions, including any extensions
  + Terms of Reference for the inquiry
  + All the submissions, usually as they become available – by clicking on ‘submissions’ on the right margin. At the top of the ‘Submissions’ page is the number of submissions which have been provided. When you find a submission you want to read, just click on the small box to the right of the title and then the blue ‘download selected’ button at the bottom and you will be able to read and save the submission. It’s a good idea to read some submissions and see the diversity – it can be very reassuring to see that some submissions are very short and to the point.
  + Contact details for the Committee Secretariat
  + Information about the inquiry
  + Upcoming and past public hearings (when and where)
  + Status of the Inquiry – ‘accepting submissions’ or ‘submissions closed’
  + When the Inquiry Report is due to Parliament, including any extensions
  + On the right margin is also a blue button ‘Track Inquiry’. A pop-up will appear asking you to either log in or register to track this item. You’ll receive an email when things happen with this inquiry, which is very useful
  + The blue ‘Upload Submission’ button is also on the right margin.