

Petitions Guidelines

Date approved: May 2024

Next review: May 2029

Introduction

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist you (the Principal Petitioner) in writing a petition to be presented to Council. These guidelines also explain the process of having a petition presented to Council and what happens once we receive it.

A petition is a paper or electronic document asking Council to take a specific action to address an issue or change policy. A petition is signed by a number of people to indicate support for a proposal. A petition needs to be of serious intent, and the language used must be respectful and moderate.

Anyone may petition Council and you do not have to be over a certain age or live within the Waikato district. However, it's important to note that Council and Council committees are accountable to the Waikato district ratepayers.

Petitioning Council is not always the only course of action available to you. Prior to petitioning Council it's important to explore the other actions available to you. These could include:

- discussing the matter with a Council staff member,
- discussing the matter with councillors and/or the Mayor,
- making a complaint to the relevant organisation, such as the Ombudsman, the Human Rights Commissioner, or other agencies.

If you believe that your request is best considered by Council and of serious intent, then follow the guidelines below on preparing a petition.

Note that whilst Council may accept a petition from the public, this decision does not mean that Council is required to take action to address the issue/s raised in the petition.

Guidelines for preparing a petition

Petitions to Council need to be checked to ensure that they follow the below guidelines. It's important that your petition:

- be in English or te reo Maaori
- asks Council to take an action/resolve an issue, this should be a short statement (no more than 300 words)
- be of serious intent
- be succinct and contain relevant information only
- state your name (this will be published on Council's website)
- has your contact details, including your physical address and phone number (these will not be published publicly)
- has your signature as the Principal Petitioner (person or organisation who started the petition)
- not be disrespectful, use offensive language, or include statements made with malice
- does not include statements that cannot be authenticated/supported with evidence

- contains a privacy waiver, advising signatories that the information gathered by the petition may be made publicly available/published (other than their signatures or contact details)
- includes a closing date for the collection of signatures
- does not include photos or videos (you can provide these if you present your petition to Council)
- is addressed directly to Waikato District Council.

Petitions can be written and presented in English or te reo Maaori and may be presented to Council in New Zealand Sign Language. However, if you are planning to present a petition in te reo Maaori or sign language, please advise Council's Democracy team of this at least **ten working days** prior to the meeting.

Once a petition is accepted by Council it becomes a protected record and will be archived in accordance with requirements under Class 10 of the List of Protected Records for Local Authorities. As such, all information supplied (including personal information) as part of the petition will be held in perpetuity. Any personal information provided as part of a petition will not be used for any purposes other than the petition process and will not be made available publicly (as per guidelines above).

Collecting signatures

It is up to you whether you want to have a paper-based or electronic petition. If you want to collect signatures to show public support for your petition, remember:

- for **paper-based petitions**, every page with signatures on it must have the full text of the request on it and the reason for the petition, if you have provided a reason. This shows that people know what they are signing.
 - People will need to write their full name and physical address (including suburb), along with their signature.
 - Signatures must be original, not photocopied, scanned, pasted, or otherwise transferred onto the paper-based petition document.
- for **electronic petitions** people will need to write their full name, physical address (including suburb), and email address when they sign the petition.

Signatures for your petition can only be collected in the ways described above and Post Office Boxes are not accepted as an address.

Process for receiving and presenting a petition

1. Send your petition to Waikato District Council.
2. The Democracy team will check that your petition aligns with the Petition Guidelines (outlined above) and Standing Orders.
 - a. Please ensure that you provide your correct contact details as we will contact you to confirm whether your petition has been accepted by Council.
 - b. Please confirm with the Democracy team if you wish to present your petition and how to do that. For example, using te reo Maaori or sign language and/or presenting in person and/or using audio visual conferencing.

3. The petition is presented by staff at the next relevant Committee of Council meeting. You will be advised which Committee of Council the petition will be presented to.
4. Either Council, or the relevant Committee of Council, will make a decision on next steps for your petition. For example, if further evidence or information is required or staff need to investigate the issues raised by your petition.
5. Waikato District Council notifies you of Council's decision.

Example paper petition

Chief Executive
Waikato District Council
Private Bag 544
Ngaruawahia 3742

Note:

To the Chief Executive,

We, the residents of [town/locality] wish to petition the Waikato District Council on the following:
[state grounds or concerns on the issue] **(Note: the petition should comprise fewer than 300 words (not including signatories.)**

The contact person for this petition is:

Name:

Postal Address:

Town/Postcode:

Contact Number:

Email address:

Note: All personal details provided, other than your name, will not be made publicly available.

**To the Waikato District Council
Signatories – please print clearly**

	Name	Physical address	Signature
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			

Privacy notice: Petitions received by the Waikato District Council are public documents and along with the name of the petitioner will be released to persons who may request a copy. The contact details/signatures of the signatories will be withheld.

Subsequent pages of petition

To the Waikato District Council,

We, the residents of *[town/locality]* wish to petition the Waikato District Council on the following:
[state grounds or concerns on the issue] **(Note: the petition should comprise fewer than 300 words (not including signatories.)**

Signatories – please print clearly

	Name	Physical address	Signature
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
15.			
16.			
17.			
18.			
19.			
20.			

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