

Presenting a petition to the council

The following information has been prepared to assist people who wish to lodge a petition with the council. It explains the rules governing petitions and provides a link to a petition template.

What is a petition?

A petition is a request for action. For example, petitions may ask council to change a decision, policy or local law, or to take action for a certain purpose or for the benefit of particular persons.

Alternatives to petitioning the council

Before commencing a petition, consider whether it is the most effective means of dealing with a grievance. In the first instance council encourages persons to attempt to resolve a matter by contacting customer service staff on (02) 6022 9300. Additionally, councillors are always available to speak with persons on matters of concern.

Using a petition to have your view heard

Notwithstanding the above alternatives, petitions are one way the community can ensure its views are heard by the council.

Should the petition be sent to the council?

Check with the council that the matter comes under its jurisdiction. In other words does the council have the power to act to address the matter, or is it a matter for the state or federal governments.

Writing a petition

- Prepare a clear message about what's wrong with the situation, why it needs to change, and how things can get better. For example:

The residents and ratepayers of Wodonga City Council draw to the attention of the council that there is a problem with speeding motorists at the intersection of ABC Street and XYZ Road. Drivers coming along XYZ Road typically speed through this busy intersection at 70 kph, endangering the lives of other motorists and pedestrians.

We therefore request that council replace the give way sign with a stop sign on XYZ Road.

- Choose language that is respectful and non-emotive. This is more likely to gain the support of others who share your view on the topic.
- State the request on each page of the petition.
- Don't attach any other documents to the petition – all the information being presented to the petitioners when they sign is all the information that is required.
- Make sure the signatories include their name, signature and address on the sheet.
- Don't let someone sign for anyone else, not even friends or family (unless they are incapable of signing).

Petitions – Information Sheet

Processing a petition

Petitions should be forwarded to the chief executive officer. The CEO will provide a copy of petitions to all councillors and submit the petition to the next council meeting. The council's *Meeting Procedure Local Law (no. 1 of 2009)* explains the process by which the council deals with petitions and the relevant section is shown below.

The first named petitioner or the person submitting the petition will be advised of the outcome.

A pro-forma for petitions is available for download from the council's website at www.wodonga.vic.gov.au.

For further information about the process for presenting petitions, please contact the council's governance officer on (02) 6022 9237.

What the local law says

64. Petitions

- 64.1 A petition is defined as a formal written application requesting some action by Council and must be in the prescribed form as set out in Schedule 2.
- 64.2 Unless Council determines to consider it as an item of urgent business or unless otherwise provided, no motion (other than a motion to receive the same) may be made on any petition until the next Ordinary meeting after that at which it has been presented.
- 64.3 Every petition presented to Council shall:
 - a) Be in writing (other than pencil), type or print.
 - b) Contain the request of the petitioners.
 - c) Be signed by the person whose names are appended to it by their names or marks and except in cases of incapacity or sickness by no one else.
 - d) Clearly state the address of every signatory to the petition.
 - e) Be signed by at least ten persons of voting age and who are residents or ratepayers of the Wodonga municipal district.
- 64.4 Any signature appearing on a page which does not bear the wording of the whole of the petition shall not be considered by the Council.
- 64.5 Every page of a petition shall be a single piece of paper and shall not be pasted, stapled or pinned or otherwise affixed to any piece of paper other than another page of the petition.
- 64.6 Any person who fraudulently signs a petition which is presented to the Council shall be guilty of an offence.
- 64.7 Where a petition presented to a Council meeting relates to an item of business on the agenda, the petition is to be considered by Council as part of its deliberations on the item.
- 64.8 Where a petition presented to a Council meeting relates to a planning application, the petition is to be processed by Council in accordance with the relevant legislation, with the organiser of the petition, or first named signatory, registered as the objector to the application.
- 64.9 A petition will not be presented to Council if, in the opinion of the CEO, it is:
 - a) derogatory or defamatory; or
 - b) aimed at embarrassing a councillor or a member of Council staff; or
 - c) relates to personnel matters; or
 - d) relates to the personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer.