

# Petition and joint letter guidelines

# Petitions

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Individuals and organisations may seek to have petitions presented to Council. A petition expresses a point of view, usually on matters of public policy, and contains a request for action, or in some cases, not to take action.

Petitions are a long established right of the citizen and allow any individual or group of individuals to place grievances directly before the Council. Their origins in our system of government date back to the seventeenth century English Parliament.

## Definitions

**Petition** is defined as “a formal written request to a governing power or to someone in authority for some action or redress of grievance” (Encyclopedia Britannica). A petition normally has a request (formally called a prayer) at the top of each of each page of signatures. As a guide, the request of a petition should read “We the undersigned petition or request Banyule City Council to...”. This should then be followed by the full name of the signatories, their address and signatures.

**Joint Letter** is any correspondence signed by more than one person, which attempts to influence the Council’s decision making or actions. The joint letter must contain the full name of the signatories, their address and signatures

## What must be in a petition or joint letter

- Petitions and Joint Letters should be addressed to Banyule City Council
- A petition or joint letter must:
  - each page of the petition will include the petition request (the facts or reasons for the petition and the specific action requested)
  - be in English or accompanied by a certified translation;
  - the petition must be in a legible and permanent form of writing, typing or printing;
  - each person who signs the petition must include their name and address
  - refer to a matter which is within the power of Council to address;
  - no email or online petitions will be accepted;
  - not be defamatory, indecent, abusive or objectionable in language or substance.
  - the language used must be moderate and the terms of the petition must not be illegal or promote illegal acts
  - the request, must be at the top of every page, to make clear what the signatories are supporting

A petition proforma document is included on page 4 of these Guidelines.

## Rules about signatures

All the signatures on a petition or joint letter must meet the following requirements:

- Petitions must contain a front page with the original handwritten signature and full name and address of the principal petitioner.
- Every signature must be written on a page bearing the terms of the petition, or the action requested in a joint letter. Signatures must not be copied, pasted or transferred on to the petition nor should they be placed on a blank page or the reverse of a sheet and must contain the terms of the petition or the action requested;
- Each signature must be made by the person signing in his or her own name. A petitioner who is not able to sign must make a mark in the presence of a witness. The witness must sign the petition as witness and write his or her address as well as the name and address of the petitioner.

## Privacy and petitions

There will be no personal information such as names and addresses provided in the report to Council and copies of petitions are not included in the Agenda. The report to Council will only provide a summary of the petition matter (including the Petition request) and the number of signatures received. Sometimes some general demographic information is also noted in the report, ie. what suburbs the petitioners are from (if relevant to the matter).

Banyule City Council is committed to the protection of your rights to privacy. We collect, use and disclose personal information in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014, the Health Records Act 2001 and other applicable legislation. The full petition including all signatures and other personal affair information included (such as email addresses, phone numbers or residential addresses) will provided to the Governance Team and to the Councillors of Banyule City Council. The personal information contained in the petition will not go beyond that primary purpose, or directly related secondary purpose unless otherwise required by law. For more information on your personal information is handled, refer to Council's [Privacy Policy](#).

## What happens to the petition or joint letter

- Acknowledgment of receipt of the petition or joint letter will be sent by an officer in the actioning department to the person who submits it to Council or the first named/principal petitioner on the first page of the petition or joint letter.
- Council's normal practice is to make every endeavour to table the petition or joint letter at the next Ordinary Council Meeting following receipt.
- A report on the petition or joint letter will be included in the Agenda for the Council Meeting, outlining actions taken or recommending a course of action. The report will replicate the request in full and advise of the number of signatures.
- The first named petitioner or the person submitting the petition/joint letter will be advised of the outcome in writing after the Meeting.

Petitions and joint letters should be addressed to Council as follows:

**Banyule City Council**

**PO Box 94**

**GREENSBOROUGH VIC 3088**

Any queries regarding serving a petition or joint letter on Council can be directed to Council's Governance department on 9490 4222.

