



**Department of
Education**

MAKING SUBMISSIONS TO INQUIRIES

AND

ATTENDING PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES



1 BACKGROUND

Parliamentary committees for State and Australian Government, various Commissions (e.g. the Productivity Commission) and agencies of the Australian, state/territory and local governments regularly conduct inquiries into matters of policy, government administration and public significance.

As part of their investigations, such inquiries may seek the input of interested parties through written submissions, surveys, and/or attendance at round tables, workshops, or public hearings.

Requests for submissions are generally issued to the Premier or Ministers, to public sector bodies or through general public invitation.

Policies and procedures govern Western Australian public sector bodies, including public schools, when making submissions and for public sector officers to appear as witnesses.

2 SCOPE

This document applies to all Department of Education employees and is consistent with Public Sector Commission guidelines and Department policies and codes (see Related Documents).

3 MAKING SUBMISSIONS TO INQUIRIES AND ATTENDING PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

Employees may be called on, as part of their official duties or through general public invitation, to explain or provide information to Parliamentary committees or inquiries on agencies' policies and activities, or through general public invitation offer their own personal experiences.

Where a request for a submission is received by a Department employee, the Department's Ministerial Services Unit (MSU) is to be immediately notified for advice.

The Director General determined which officers shall be authorised to make public comment.

3.1 PUBLIC OFFICERS AS PRIVATE CITIZENS

Department of Education employees have the same rights as other citizens to write submissions to inquiries or appear before committees, provided it is clearly separated from their role as a public sector officer.

Employees providing a personal submission in response to a general public invitation are encouraged to consider the guidance for content of submissions and evidence by those acting in their public capacity, and remain cognisant of their obligations under Department's Code of Conduct and Standards, and relevant public sector policies and guidelines.

Unless authorised to do so in writing by the Director General, any submission by an employee should clearly indicate that it is provided in their personal capacity and is not on behalf of the Department, any particular school or the state government.

When providing evidence in a personal capacity, they cannot disclose official information obtained in the course of their employment.

In the event the evidence is likely to attract attention, they should consider notifying the Director General of their intention to provide evidence in their personal capacity.

3.2 SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF THE DEPARTMENT

A submission to a public inquiry about the business of the Department would typically be coordinated by the Department on behalf of the Minister. This includes any provision of verbal or written evidence including documents, records or data.

The Department will coordinate with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and/or other agencies any whole-of-government submission or appearances before national inquiries and committees.

Employees contacted to submit evidence or appear before an inquiry should before doing so promptly notify Ministerial Services who will advise the Director General, and Minister.

Any submission or evidence cannot be forwarded to the inquiry or coordinating agency without the approval of the Director General and Minister. Depending on the nature of the inquiry, the approval of Cabinet may be required.

Confirmation of those officers authorised to make public comment or attend a hearing will be provided by the Director General in writing.

3.3 CONTENT OF SUBMISSIONS AND EVIDENCE

Those employees who are authorised to make written or verbal public comment should confine themselves to providing such information as is necessary to explain government policy or to provide factual, explanatory and background material pertinent to the question at hand.

In doing so, they should avoid making any comment which could undermine public confidence or disrupt the everyday administration of either the public service or the government of the-day. To this end, they should not:

- disclose confidential information or information gained in the course of their employment without prior written approval from the Director General
- provide personal opinions that could damage the credibility or reputation (or both) of:
 - schools,
 - public education in Western Australia,
 - the Department,
 - the government,
 - an individual, or
 - political party
- give personal views on matters of government policy or administration
- speculate on future policy directions
- publicly criticise any political party, its actions or its policies

- prolong discussion or debate on an issue once a decision has been made, or a policy adopted.

3.4 SUPPORT

Staff authorised to give evidence before inquiries as Department representatives will be supported to prepare for the inquiry by Ministerial Services.

4 RELATED DOCUMENTS

[Premier's Circular 2021/10: Making Written Submission to National Inquiries](#)

[Guidelines for public sector employees providing evidence to parliamentary committees](#)

[Public Sector Commission: Administrative Instruction 102 – Official Communications](#)

[Public Sector Commission: Administrative Instruction 711 – Official Information](#)

[Public Sector Commission: Administrative Instruction 728 – Media & Public Communications](#)

[Department of Education: Code of Conduct](#)

[Department of Education: Communication Arrangements between the Office of the Minister for Education and the Department of Education](#)

[Department of Education: Communications Style Guide](#)

5 CONTACT INFORMATION

Employees who require advice in relation to this guideline may seek assistance from the Ministerial Services Unit (MSU).

School and regional office staff: through line management to the Director of Education.

Central Office staff: through line management to the Executive Director.

Submission by the Department as lead agency or contributing to a whole-of-government response

Below is the process taken by Department of Education and the Minister's Office once an invitation or request received.

Submission by Staff Member in their professional capacity

Submissions by staff in their professional capacity or providing information gained through employment must have prior written authorisation from the Director General.

Submission by Staff Member as a Private Citizen

Evidence provided by staff member in respect of their personal capacity, and not on behalf of the Department.

Submission to be developed

