



Giving oral evidence at a Legislative Assembly committee hearing



Parliamentary committees are made up of members of parliament. They investigate matters of public importance and they report their findings and recommendations to the parliament.

You can participate in an inquiry by giving evidence at a committee hearing. Public hearings provide an opportunity for parliamentary committees to investigate an issue by speaking directly to people who have knowledge and views on that topic.

They can influence the findings and recommendations that a committee makes.

You can make an important contribution to the work of the Legislative Assembly's committees by sharing your views at a public hearing.

These notes will help you to prepare for a public hearing.

Who can give evidence?

Each committee decides which individuals and organisations it would like to hear from at a public hearing.

You are also free to ask to give evidence at a hearing, but keep in mind that it might not always be possible for a committee to speak to all those who wish to come and give evidence.

What should I do in advance?

If you are an organisation – make sure you are sending the best person to represent you; your representative should have sound knowledge of the issues the committee is exploring.

Review your submission – it is highly likely the committee will ask you questions about the things you said in your submission.

Look at the Terms of Reference – they will help to focus your thinking on the issues.

If you have special requests – including presentation equipment, then you should let the committee know.

If you wish to be accompanied by a lawyer – let the committee know as there are special rules you should be aware of.

If you think your evidence should be confidential – let the committee know as early as possible, as the committee will need to agree to your request.

Where will the hearing take place?

Most committee hearings are held at the Legislative Assembly Committee Office, which is located at:

Level 1, 11 Harvest Terrace
West Perth WA 6005

Sometimes, a hearing may be in another location. In those cases, committee staff will let you know where your hearing will take place.



On the day of your hearing

- When you arrive, go to the reception desk and give your name. The staff will ask you to complete a Details of Witness form.
- You will also be provided with an Information for Witnesses briefing sheet. It is important that you read this sheet as the committee will ask if you have read this and if you have any questions.
- Once in the hearing room, the Chair will ask you to state your full name and the capacity in which you appear before the committee.
- The Chair may invite you to make a brief opening statement.
- The Chair then normally leads by asking a series of questions, followed in turn by the other committee members.

After the hearing

Following the hearing, Hansard will produce an 'uncorrected' transcript of your evidence. The uncorrected transcript will be published on the committee's website as soon as it becomes available, and you will be provided with a copy in order to make minor corrections. About two weeks after the hearing, a corrected version of the transcript is published on the committee's website and forms part of the committee's formal evidence.

Hearings usually take place in public

On the day of your hearing, it is possible that the public and the media will be present.

If the Chair agrees, the media **can** take photographs and video recordings in the first few minutes of a hearing, but cameras will not be present after those first few minutes.

All other media and members of the public are welcome to stay throughout any hearing that takes place in public session.

Some hearings may be broadcast

Some meeting rooms are equipped with cameras enabling broadcast on the internet or re-broadcast on news programs. If the committee elects to broadcast your hearing, you will be notified in advance.

I want to give evidence confidentially

If you are concerned about the confidential nature of the evidence you are providing, you can ask that the evidence you give be heard in closed session, or *in camera*.

You should let the committee know as early as possible if you wish to give evidence confidentially.

Parliamentary privilege

Parliamentary privilege protects you from being taken to court and questioned about what you say to the committee during your hearing. This is important so that you are able to be honest and direct with the committee, without fear of being sued for defamation or fear of harassment, intimidation or improper influence by anyone. In return, the committee expects you will provide evidence that is directly relevant to its inquiry and the questions asked, and not abuse the protection you have.

If you repeat any of the statements you make in hearing evidence (where they are not already in the public domain) or publish these statements elsewhere, you are not protected by parliamentary privilege for those subsequent statements.

More information

Additional information is available at:
www.parliament.wa.gov.au/laco/faq

Information about specific committees is available at:
www.parliament.wa.gov.au/laco/committees

Or you can contact us by phone:
(08) 9222 7494



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