

Receipt of Petitions Policy

Date Adopted: 15 April 2025

Version: 6.0

Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- establish a consistent approach to ensure petitions are authentic and are handled in an effective timely and transparent manner,
- ensure the content of petitions are effectively communicated to Councillors and staff and considered by them in the decision-making process.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to all petitions submitted to Maitland City Council, to all persons submitting petitions and to all Councillors and staff who deal with petitions.

This policy aligns with the provisions of the NSW Local Government Act 1993 and any other relevant state legislation, ensuring compliance with statutory requirement.

Policy Statement

1. WHAT IS A PETITION?

- 1.1. A petition is a formal written request, seeking some form of action by Council.
- 1.2. Petitions are one of the many ways the community can express their concerns and request action regarding issues which the Council has power to act upon.

2. CONTENT OF PETITIONS

- 2.1. A petition must be about a matter on which Council has power to act.
- 2.2. A petition should:
 - be a clear and concise statement that the petitioners wish to bring to the notice of Council
 - conclude with a request that Council do, or do not do, something or take some course of action
 - where possible, be clearly written, typed, or printed in English, and
 - be respectful, and not offensive in its language.
 - be accessible to all members of the community. Council will provide assistance for individuals with disabilities, those with limited digital literacy, and non-English speakers to ensure their concerns can be effectively communicated.
- 2.3. If your petition is in a language other than English it is to be accompanied by a certified translation. The person certifying the translation must place his or her name and address on the translation.

Petitions concerning objections to development applications will not be accepted under this policy. The most appropriate way for Council to consider objections to development applications is through the development application notification process.

3. FORMAT OF PETITIONS

3.1 Paper petition

3.1.1 A person submitting a paper petition ("Chief Petitioner") must ensure that the petition:

- is signed by at least ten (10) persons,
- is accompanied by a fully completed Petition Lodgement Form (see Attachment 1), including:
 - a clear and concise statement identifying the subject matter of the petition (i.e. the reason you are writing to Council) and the nature of the action requested (i.e. what you are asking Council to do),
 - the number of signatories and number of pages to the petition,
 - the full printed name, street address, phone number and signature of the Chief Petitioner (together with the name of the organisation/group they represent if the petition is submitted on behalf of an organisation or group).
- adopts the format of the Petition Template (see Attachment 2), in that each page:
 - clearly states at the top of the page the subject of the petition and the action requested,
 - contains the full name, street address (including postcode) and signature of all petitioners.

3.2 Electronic petition

3.2.1 An electronic petition (e-petition) is a petition that is 'signed' on-line, usually through a website.

3.2.2 A person submitting an e-petition ("Chief Petitioner") must ensure that the petition has:

- a clear and concise statement identifying the subject matter of the petition (i.e. the reason you are writing to Council) and the nature of the action requested (i.e. what you are asking Council to do),
- a statement identifying the total number of 'signatories' to the petition,
- the full printed name, street address, email address and phone number of the Chief Petitioner (together with the name of the organisation/group they represent if the petition is submitted on behalf of an organisation or group,
- the full name, street address (including postcode) and email address of all petitioners and
- been signed on-line by at least 240 persons.

3.2.3 Electronic petitions, such as change.org petitions will not be considered by Council directly. Council will consider electronic petitions from third-party platforms if accompanied by verifiable data such as the names and local addresses of signatories. The Chief Petitioner must provide a certified summary of the petition's validity.

4. LODGEMENT OF PETITIONS

Petitions must be addressed to the General Manager. If a petition is received by a Councillor or staff they will forward it to the Office of the General Manager.

The original petition (no copies) may be lodged with Council in the following ways:

Hand Delivered: Maitland City Council Administration Building - 263 High Street, Maitland.

Post: PO Box 220 Maitland 2320

Email: gm@maitland.nsw.gov.au

5. PROCESS FOR ASSESSMENT OF PETITIONS

- 5.1. On receipt of the petition, the General Manager will assess the petition for compliance with this policy.
- 5.2. The Office of the General Manager will send an acknowledgement letter/email to the Chief Petitioner within five (5) working days acknowledging receipt of the petition and advising of compliance with policy.
- 5.3. The General Manager will refer the petition to the appropriate department for investigation and compilation of a report to Council. When assessing petitions, Council will consider alignment with strategic priorities, available resources, and the impact on the community. These criteria will guide decisions on whether to act on the petition.

6. REJECTION OF PETITIONS

- 6.1. If any of the requirements for petition content, format or lodgement are not complied with, the petition may be rejected by the General Manager.
- 6.2. If the petition is rejected, it will be returned to the Chief Petitioner with an explanation of the reasons for rejection.

7. COMMUNICATIONS

- 7.1. Council will communicate only with the Chief Petitioner and will not respond individually to all petitioners. It is the responsibility of the Chief Petitioner to communicate information to other signatories to the petition.
- 7.2. Council may, at its absolute discretion, verify the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition, should it be considered necessary for any reason.

8. REPEAT PETITIONS

- 8.1. A petition will not normally be considered where it is received within 12 months of another petition considered by Council on the same matter. Where a petition is received on a similar issue to a previous petition, the Chief Petitioner will be notified of the outcome of the previous petition if the Council considers that the issues raised have been addressed.

9. DETERMINATION OF PETITIONS

- 9.1. A nominated representative from the appropriate Council Department will keep the Chief Petitioner informed of any progress and will provide notification of when the petition will be tabled at a Council meeting.
- 9.2. The petition will be reported back to Council within 3 months of the receipt of the petition. At this meeting Council will decide what action, if any, it will take on the petition. If a petition concern matters beyond Council's jurisdiction, it may be referred to the relevant state or federal government agency. Council will inform the Chief Petitioner of this referral, and any updates received.
- 9.3. The nominated representative from the appropriate Council Department will then notify the Chief Petitioner of Council's decision within 21 days after the petition is tabled.
- 9.4. An unredacted copy of the petition will be held in the Office of the General Manager for Councillors to assess upon request.

10. Definitions

CHIEF PETITIONER	The main or head petitioner identified with appropriate contact details, or, if not identified as such, the first petitioner.
COUNCILLOR	A person elected or appointed to civic office as a member of the governing body of Council, including the Lord Mayor.
E-PETITION OR ELECTONIC PETITION	Refers to a Petition lodged on Council's e-Petitions online portal.
PETITION	A formal written request to Council seeking action or special consideration of a particular matter, that Council is authorised to determine.
STAFF	A person who is directly employed by Council on a full time, part time, temporary, or casual basis.

Attachment 1 – Petition Lodgement Form

Petition Lodgement Form

To the General Manager of Maitland City Council, please find the attached petition concerning the following:

SUBJECT OF PETITION	
ACTION REQUESTED	
REASON FOR REQUEST	

NUMBER OF PERSONS WHO HAVE SIGNED THE PETITION		NUMBER OF SIGNED PAGES ATTACHED	
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CHIEF PETITIONER CONTACT NAME:	
CHIEF PETITIONER STREET ADDRESS (NO PO BOXES PLEASE):	
CHIEF PETITIONER CONTACT PHONE/EMAIL:	
SIGNATURE OF CHIEF PETITIONER:	
IF ACTING ON BEHALF OF AN ORGANISATION/GROUP, NAME OF ORGANISATION/GROUP:	

Privacy Statement: Information provided to Council in a petition is protected by the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998. This is embodied in Council's Privacy Management Plan, which is available on Council's website or on request. Any questions concerning privacy or the use of personal information should be referred to Council's Privacy Officer.

Attachment 2 – Petition Template

Petition

SUBJECT OF PETITION	
ACTION REQUESTED	

[illegible]

Please attach additional pages as necessary.

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Policy Administration

BUSINESS GROUP:	People and Performance
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Executive Manager People and Performance
COUNCIL REFERENCE:	Ordinary Council Meeting 15 April 2025 – Item 14.3
POLICY REVIEW DATE:	Three (3) years from date of adoption
FILE NUMBER:	35/1
RELEVANT LEGISLATION:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 • Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act 1998
RELATED POLICIES / PROTOCOLS / PROCEDURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of Meeting Practice

Policy History

VERSION	DATE APPROVED	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGES
1	12 April 1998	New policy adopted
2	10 November 2009	Expansion of policy
3	25 January 2011	New format adopted, responsibilities in determination section modified & attachments updated.
4	27 October 2015	Expansion of policy and attachments updated.
5	25 February 2020	Policy updated to include electronic petitions and clarify content/format requirements.
5.1	18 February 2025	Updated to new branding and alignment to organisation structure. No change to content.
6	15 April 2025	Update physical address and email address, removal fax number, update to petition inclusions, update to assessment and determination of petitions, and definitions included.