

GUIDE TO MAKING A VERBAL SUBMISSION



Clutha District Council usually offers people who make written submissions on a particular issue the option of speaking at a hearing. This is known as a verbal submission and it gives you a chance to reinforce what you have written. We appreciate that you have taken the time to make a written submission, and to come along and speak to it.

The following information is provided to assist those who are intending to make a verbal submission. This could relate to a proposed plan (e.g., Annual, Long Term or Reserve Management plans), or a Council Policy or Bylaw.

A Council officer will generally contact you to confirm the date of any hearing and to discuss details.

Should you speak at a hearing?

It's up to you. How comfortable do you feel about speaking in public (hearings are usually open to the public)? How effective are you as a speaker? Even if you are not a great speaker, if you have good ideas or feel strongly about an issue you could get your opinions across effectively at a hearing.

A verbal submission enables you to express your views in a different way or stress your most important points.

Hearings also give councillors a chance to question you about your views. They might have received comments on your submission from Council officials. Council appreciates that you are prepared to back up your opinions and further explain your arguments.

Understand the environment

Sit in the audience at a hearing or go to a Council meeting. This will help you understand procedures and protocols – you'll also learn something about the people who will be listening to you.

Ask how the hearing will run

Ask Council officials to tell you how many people will speak, who will be on the committee, who chairs it and where you are on the agenda. If you want to hand out copies of additional material, give them to officials well before the hearing. Ask if further submissions will be called for. Some councils call for a supplementary submission process after a hearing, especially if there are contentious issues.

Think about making a joint verbal submission

If other people have made written submissions similar to yours, a joint verbal statement could have more impact. You could all be there to support the person you want to speak, or you could each take turns to speak.

Arrive ahead of time

Get a feel for the setup, watch how committee members listen and respond to the speakers before you. Then you'll know if your points have been covered or if you should counter some of their arguments.

Introduce yourself

Make sure everyone knows who you are, why you are making a submission and what your view is on the proposal. You should also state whether you are making a personal submission, or if you are speaking on

behalf of a group. If you are representing the views of others, it is important to say exactly who you represent and what authority you have to make a verbal submission on their behalf.

Be strategic - make your strongest points

Think carefully about how much you should say and how you'll say it. There's no need to cover every point you've put in your written submission. Talk about what you think is your most convincing argument. If you want to mention all your points, spend more time on your strongest argument.

Don't just read your submission or make a formal speech

They've already read your submission, and this is the chance for you to present things a little differently. But there's no need to write and memorise a formal speech. A good verbal submission is a mix of informal opening and closing comments with a more formal style for your main arguments.

Be prepared for questions

The Council might want to question some of your arguments. Think about what they might ask or issues they might challenge you on. Have more information ready if you think it might be needed.

Be prepared for media interest

Journalists often attend hearings. You need to be prepared for media interest during and after the hearing. If your verbal submission made an impact, journalists might want to interview you after the hearing. Remember, it's always your decision whether or not you speak to the media. It's probably a question of whether any further comment from you will strengthen or weaken your position.

How does Council deal with submissions?

When making a decision on a particular matter, Council will take into account:

- The evidence provided
- Advice from Council officers
- The views of the people most affected by a proposal
- The particular views of people
- The number of people holding a particular view
- The knowledge and expertise of the submitters.

It is not a numbers game – Council doesn't just count the numbers for and against – it will take note of the evidence and arguments when making their decisions.

Thanks again for taking the time to make a verbal submission. Council really appreciates you getting involved and voicing your democratic right.