

Taking part in a hearing: Tips for speaking to your submission at a Council hearing.

Have you made a submission and intend to speak about it at a District Plan hearing? Here's what you need to know to be prepared and help things run smoothly on the day.

Plan ahead

- » We'll be in touch with the date, time and location(s) of the hearing. We'll also help you confirm a speaking slot.
- » Diagrams and photos can be provided to the Hearing Panel to support your submission. These should be supplied to the Hearing Administrator at dphearings@qldc.govt.nz at least **two working days** before the hearing date, and will be published online as public documents.
- » You will have **ten minutes** to speak to your submission. The Hearing Panel will have already read your submission and any evidence you've provided, so there is no need to read it aloud. Instead, aim to highlight two or three key points and then allow time for the Panel to ask questions. If you require more than ten minutes you must request an extended time slot when booking your hearing slot and explain why the additional time is needed. This must be approved prior to the hearing.
- » Make sure you read the **s42A Report(s)** carefully. These will be released prior to the hearing and will help guide your speaking points.
- » If your views have changed since you made your written submission, just let the Hearing Panel know what has changed and why. If you no longer wish to speak or can't attend, you can nominate someone to speak on your behalf.
- » Stay up to date by reading any **procedural minutes** issued by the Panel.

s42A Reports

The s42A Reports, named after Section 42A of the Resource Management Act (RMA), will be released prior to the hearing. You should read these reports thoroughly.

What are they?

A s42A Report is a document prepared by a Council planner before a hearing, often with input from relevant independent experts.

The report offers recommendations to the Panel based on the matters in the submissions, and evaluates the proposal against the RMA. It advises the Panel on whether to fully accept, partially accept, or reject the changes requested by the submitters.

Why are they important?

Understanding the Council's position on submissions will help you focus your presentation on the most relevant points and respond to any recommended changes to the notified plan change or variation.

Procedural Minutes

Procedural Minutes are written directions that can be sent out by the Panel at any stage - before, during, or even after the hearing. They're issued to give directions or clarify steps in the process. They will be sent out to all submitters, whether you attend the hearing or not.

It's important that you read any procedural minutes you receive. They'll outline key dates, submission requirements, or procedures, especially if you're bringing expert witnesses.

They form part of the official hearing record and ensure everyone is working from the same information.



On the day

- » Arrive early to find parking and be seated before your allocated time.
- » The Hearing Panel is made up of independent experts and Councillors. Their role is to understand your perspective—not to cross-examine you.
- » When it's your turn, you'll sit at a table in front of the Panel and speak directly to them.
- » Speak clearly, be concise, and stick to your key points.
- » Be mindful of the time—make your points and leave space for questions. After you've spoken, you're welcome to leave, or to stay and observe the rest of the hearing.

What happens after the hearing?

1. Hearing closes

The Panel formally closes the hearing once all evidence, questions, and responses are complete.

2. Deliberations

The Panel considers all the evidence, submissions, and the s42A Report(s).

3. Recommendation Report drafting

The Panel prepares a Recommendation Report summarising key issues, outlining their findings, and recommends whether to accept, accept in part or reject submissions on the plan change or variation. This may include recommended changes to the provisions or the mapping.

4. Decision is notified

Councillors make the final decision—usually at a Full Council meeting. A public notice is issued, and all submitters are notified directly of the decision.

5. Appeals period opens

Submitters have 30 working days from the date the decision is notified to lodge an appeal to the Environment Court. Appeals can only be on matters raised in your original submission or further submission.

