



WRITERS STYLE GUIDE

A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR POLICY BRIEFS



2021

PURPOSE OF THIS STYLE GUIDE

This style guide aims to provide an author with a set of guidelines that informs the way a Policy Brief is constituted in both form and substance. This provides the author with a clear framework to ensure they understand the expectations of the Brief in what they should write, and in what structure they should write it in. This reduces the author's chances of being turned down, and decreases the time and intensity of the editing process.

WHAT IS A POLICY BRIEF?

A Policy Brief is a document that analyses a current issue or gap in policy, and based on an evaluation of the current policies to deal with an issue, recommends original policies. Innovative and creative yet down-to-earth and well-considered recommendations will make for interesting Briefs to publish, so YAIA encourages its interested authors to think outside the box.

STRUCTURE

All Policy Briefs should be structured as follows:

1. Title

The shorter the better and please avoid clickbait titles. In a similar sense to an academic essay, use a colon to make the second half of the heading more specific.

2. Executive Summary

200 words detailing the problem the policy brief is addressing and the recommendations that will be made. The focus should be on the problem as it presently is and its salience in international affairs and relevance to Australia.

3. Background

300 – 350 words providing relevant context to the scenario. This is not a section to write a complete history, but should provide background to the situation to a reader unfamiliar with the topic.

4. The Problem

Essentially, what is this policy brief addressing and why is the problem worthy of attention?

5. Policy Recommendations

Ideally three recommendations, in order of priority and ability to be implemented. This is where it is especially important to see exactly how Australia fits into the situation.

These recommendations can be ambitious if they can be realistically implemented in a short-time frame.

Each recommendation should be introduced by its own short subheading.

Recommendations should be the author's original thought and work, using current policies as a stepping off point.

6. Conclusion

A brief summary of the problem, why it needs to be addressed and the proposed policy recommendations. A projection to the future is also a nice way to end the piece.

7. Author Biography

Include a short biography for each author at the end. Structure of the biography should be: *<Full name> is studying/working in <place/degree/etc>. <First name> is interested in <one or two areas of international relations>.*

Please send a .doc or .docx file.

LENGTH

The length of policy briefs is fairly flexible, however 1000 – 1200 words is recommended. If it is longer, please inform the editor of this.

REFERENCING

Endnotes are acceptable for Policy Briefs as detailed evidence is required to support assertions. However, it is important that these don't saturate the piece. You will work with an editor closely who will amend any other changes that need to be made.

An endnote reference should be in Vancouver style. A handy guide to Vancouver can be found here: <https://guides.lib.monash.edu/citing-referencing/vancouver>.

Provide weblinks whenever possible. However, references should not link to information that is behind a paywall as the sources should be accessible to all readers. Links to news articles, taskforce reports and other governmental agency reports are ideal.

TONE

Please refer to previously published Policy Briefs for practical guidance on how to write underneath each heading.

YAIA's audience is educated people with an interest in international affairs. Readers will range between undergraduate students to young professionals. A level of prior knowledge can be assumed.

The tone of the Policy Brief is authoritative, reliable, knowledgeable, and informed. Refrain from contractions and informal grammatical structures.

Avoid colloquial language that one might hear in conversation. Avoid jargon, and if a term is vital to the Brief, explain the term in simple English towards the beginning of the Brief.

Policy-making and policy recommendation can be charged with high emotionality and opinion. Policy submissions will be at their most persuasive when they are written with objectivity, critical thinking, and an even, logical, impartial and relatively unemotional tone. A mixture of pathos, ethos, and logos will be the most holistic and effective way of persuading an audience.

Sentences should be sharp and to the point. A word count of 1200 words maximum is very easy to write to, so keeping words precise and concise is crucial for an engaging Brief.

The editors reserve the discretion to ask an author to consider drafting their piece if the editors do not consider that the piece could be published within three rounds of editing.

STYLE

Policy Briefs must conform to a number of specific style requirements for consistency between Briefs published by different authors.

When writing an abbreviation, place parentheses around the abbreviation. No quotes are required.

E.g.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provides

The World Health Organisation (WHO), in its Annual Report...

Use single quotation marks per Australian publishing standards.

E.g.

The Report stated that '....'.

Numbers one to ten are written as words, numbers 11 onwards are written with their arabic number symbol.

Keep punctuation consistent throughout.

Words that can be hyphenated should be hyphenated throughout the entire piece. If a phrase is used once in title case, it should be consistently referred to in the same way throughout the Brief.

With the exception of minor spelling and grammar corrections, you will be asked to approve the edits before publication.

LEGAL

Like most other publications, YAIA will not accept any material that contravenes defamation or discrimination law, does not contribute to international relations and affairs policy, or is in any other way deemed inappropriate to publish.

Once published, the Brief becomes the intellectual property of YAIA.

At any point in the editing process, an author can choose to withdraw their submission.

SUBMISSIONS AND QUESTIONS

Please direct submissions and any questions to policy@youngausint.org.au