

Tips for Engaging your MP

You're reaching out to your local Minister of Parliament to share your ideas and get involved with Australia's Democracy...great! Here are some suggestions about how to go about contacting and communicating with your local Minister of Parliament (MP):

Meeting face to face:

Call to organise an appointment, making sure you have the following information:

Who you or your group are and that you live or go to school in the member's electorate

Why you would like to meet with or speak to the MP When you would like to schedule a meeting for

Who will be coming to the meeting (if a visit is planned), and what you hope to achieve.



Details for each MP's electorate office on the Senators and Members section of the Australian Parliament website (www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Guidelines_for_Contacting_Senators_and_Members).

Preparation: Spend some time preparing what you will say to your MP. Choose one to three things that you'd like to cover in your discussion with your MP - too many and the impact of what you're trying to say will be lost. Decide ahead of time who will lead the meeting, who will address what issues, who will speak when and for how long. When preparing what you're going to say, think about why you want your MP to care. Do you have an anecdote, or story or example of something that will make the issue real for your MP? Engage with them by asking what they think about the issue, too!

- Normally, a 15-30 minute time slot will be set aside for your meeting. A meeting usually takes the following course:
- Welcome and introductions
- Making your case
- Discussion
- Wrapping up

Addressing your MP: Use an MP's correct title and surname unless they tell you to use his or her first name. Try to stick to the reason you're there. Use your own words, and don't assume the MP knows anything about your issue. You might find you know more about a particular issue than he/she does - but if you don't know an answer, just say so. Be as informative as you can, but don't make things up. If required, get back to your MP with an answer after the meeting. Local MPs are interested in their local community, so let them know what your group is doing on the issue. Also, avoid contradicting each other, or talking over the top of your MP! For more information on this visit the Parliament of Australia website: (www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Guidelines_for_Contacting_Senators_and_Members/How_to_address_Senators_and_Members)

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Addressing the issue: Work out beforehand what you will be asking your MP to do and let them know how you would like to follow up on the issue. The point of engaging with your MP will be to encourage them to take action in some way around the issue you're raising. What is it you want your MP to do? Don't be afraid to ask – representing their constituents is a normal part of a politician's job. You might ask your MP to: reflect your views to leaders within their party; attend an event; use their contacts to help publicise an issue; or raise your issue in a speech to Parliament.



Send a follow-up email or letter in the week following your meeting, thanking the MP for their time, and reminding them about the action (if any) they agreed to take. If you're invited to meet with other staff members, do it! They are also influential - treat those meetings as if they were with the MP.

Arrange a phone meeting

If you can't arrange a face-to-face meeting with your MP, or would prefer to talk to them on the phone, then arranging time for a phone conversation is also a way to engage with MPs. Prepare for this conversation in the same way you would for a meeting.

Correspond in writing

If you can't or don't want to meet face-to-face with your MP, corresponding in writing is an effective alternative. When communicating via writing, address the MP by the title given to them on the Parliament House website. Explain who you are and the issue you're raising. Make an impact by keeping your letter to a single page and using a conversational (yet respectful!) tone so that the MP understands that you're a real person. If you need to, include some facts and figures, but don't let them overload the contents of the correspondence.

Finish the letter by asking your MP to do something (in response to your issue), include your contact details in the letter and request a reply from the MP about how they will respond to the issue you have raised. Then sign the letter and address it to the MP's electoral and/or parliamentary office. You can find contact details of MPs here: www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Guidelines_for_Contacting_Senators_and_Members

Send them a pre-recorded video

A 'piece to camera' video will have great cut-through, and may just catch the eye of your local MP. A piece to camera involves speaking directly to the viewer by looking down the lens of the camera.

Start by writing a script (similar to a speech), keeping it simple with plain language.

Time yourself reading the script aloud to see how long it goes for. Try to keep it to about 90 seconds. Don't assume that your viewer knows what you're talking about: you may know what regenerative practices are, but will the viewer? Remember to include your 'ask' - what you want your local MP to do after watching your video.

When on camera, sit or stand in a comfortable, steady position. Don't sway or move around while speaking - otherwise that's what your viewer will focus on! Keep your hands in front and feel free to use them as you talk. Make eye contact with the camera and avoid looking off to the side, especially at the beginning and end of a recording. If you need to, download a teleprompter app and use your device as a teleprompter. Remember to smile to engage the viewer. Create a relaxed, conversational vibe, by imagining you are telling a friend.

Bring lots of energy. Viewers are used to seeing animated presenters on television, so a flat delivery will not be very interesting to watch. At the time it may feel like you're going overboard, but when you watch the video an energetic performance will be much more engaging.

Good Luck!!!