
Guidelines for Lobbying

Get to know who to speak with.....

An essential part of any movement for social change is the effort to create new legislation. To do this, you must know how to communicate with your elected officials.

First, find out who they are by looking online for a list of your local State Government members. Look for Legislative Assembly. All of the State government web sites have full listings – [for NSW go here](#)

Next, get to know as many legislators as you can. Don't wait until your group wants to introduce a bill. Lay the foundation before you start a legislative campaign. Attend "town meetings" where legislators meet with voters to answer questions. Write to thank them for taking specific positions that you support. Arrange to meet with them, even if it's on an issue that you don't feel strongly about. The important thing is to establish a rapport.

It's also very helpful to get to know elected officials' aides, who are often much more accessible and can often provide you with good "inside" information.

Writing Letters.....

When writing to an elected official, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Include your name and address: Identify yourself as a constituent by including your address when you write to your elected representative/s. Generally, politicians are likely to pay most attention to people who live in their electoral district.
- Keep it brief: Letters should be no longer than one page and should be about one issue only. Be as concise as possible. Politicians receive many letters on many topics every day. Long letters are likely to be put aside to read on a less busy day and that day may never come.
- Use your own words, not someone else's: An original letter sent by one single person is more effective than a form letter (or cut and pasted texts) sent by dozens of people. Even if your writing skills are not the best, a letter written in your own words will carry much more weight than regurgitating what someone else said.
- Handwrite, or type and sign, your letter: A handwritten, or typed and signed, letter is far more effective than photocopied form letters, postcard campaigns or emails. Some politicians regard handwritten letters more highly than typewritten letters (some of these are technologically illiterate, and some find it convenient to claim the sender probably just cut and pasted what someone else said without thinking about the issue themselves). Some, very likely many, regard emails as "second class mail" and some do not even read email
- State the topic clearly: Include a subject line at the beginning of your letter. If it is about a specific piece of legislation (an Act) or a proposed law (a Bill), state the full name of the Act or Bill in the subject line, or at least in the first paragraph
- Start with a clear statement of purpose: For example:
"I am writing to urge your support for / opposition to..."
"I am writing to ask you to support / oppose ..."

- Focus on three important points: Choose the three points that are most likely to be persuasive in gaining support for your position and flesh them out. This is more effective than attempting to address numerous points in a letter
- Ask your representative to take concrete action: For example, in relation to a proposed law (a Bill), ask them to raise the matter in their party room and seek to have their party oppose the Bill. Point out that the issues are important enough to warrant amendments to the Bill, and/or for the representative to cross the floor and vote against the Bill if their party supports it
- Ask for a response to your letter: While the response will usually be a form letter, written and authorised by their political party, you will know you have had an impact on their office. Party politics in Australia are such that few elected politicians are likely to tell you whether or not they personally share your views/position. However, a well-written letter can be instrumental in prompting them to take action behind the public scenes to inform and potentially change their political party's position
- Personalise your letter: When possible, include a personal story and/or information on how the issue affects you, your family, your business, or people around you. This can help your representative understand your position and can be very persuasive as he/she forms a position on an issue. The more personal your letter, the more impact it is likely to have
- Personalise your relationship: If you have ever voted for the representative, or contributed time or money to their election campaign, or have met them, etc, say so. The closer your representative feels to you, the more effective your letter is likely to be
- Be polite: Be courteous, but don't be afraid to take a firm position. While your representative's job is to represent you, remember that politicians and their staff are people too. Threats, hostile remarks and rude/offensive language are among the fastest ways to alienate people who could otherwise decide to support your position in light of rational and reasoned argument. Your representative could be in elected office for decades, and could be promoted to higher, more influential, office within their party. Avoid creating enemies
- Thanks is as important as criticism: Politicians/political parties need to be able to tell the 'other side' that they have been inundated with calls and letters supporting their position. Write thank you letters to politicians/parties that you know support your position. This will encourage them to stand firm on their position rather than backing down, which has often happened during the passage of proposed laws through Australian parliaments
- Keep the irritation factor low: Avoid accusing / criticising the wrong politicians/party. Politicians, like anyone else, may become irritated when accused of holding views they do not. If you are not sure of the views of the person or political party you are contacting, either research the matter, ask them, or just inform them of your views and why they should support same.
- For information on how to address a letter to a member of Parliament, see Form of Address below
- Support your argument with facts, not emotions
- Don't assume that the legislator knows all about the issue. Provide background information
- Never threaten ("I won't vote for you if ..."). Today's opponent may be tomorrow's ally on another issue

- Don't offend by saying, "You probably won't pay any attention to this" or, "I know you won't do anything."
- Clearly state what you want him or her to do (vote "yes" or "no" on a particular bill, urge a government agency to investigate a laboratory, etc.). Don't be vague.
- Include your name and address on the envelope, in the letter, and in all e-mail messages
- Don't be self-righteous about being a "citizen" or a "taxpayer." They assume that you are both.

Use the proper form for the address and salutation. On the envelope and inside address. The salutation for state representatives is "Mr." or "Ms".

Eg Mr Peter Debnam, Member for Vaucluse.

Ministers of Portfolios are addressed as " the Hon. Xxx"

Tips for Sending Emails.....

- Email is by far the least effective way of communicating your views to your representative/s. For reasons why, and comments by various politicians, see information above.
- However, when you are unable to find time to mail a letter or make a phone call, it is better to send an email than do nothing. The following tips will help maximise the probability of your email being read and considered:
- Most of the tips above for writing letters also apply to writing email.
- Write to appropriate politicians, not everyone: Send your email to your local representative/s and/or the Minister/Shadow Minister responsible for the matter you are writing about, not to everyone. Mass emailing politicians can overload mail servers and be blocked like spam or make it difficult for politicians and their staff to cope. Thoughtfully and appropriately directed email is less likely to irritate and more likely to be read and considered
- Include your name and address: Email can come from anywhere in the world so be sure to identify yourself as a constituent by including your address (preferably at the top of your email). Politicians are most likely to pay attention to people who live in their electoral district or at least in Australia. Also, many politicians reply to email only by postal mail
- Use the formality of a letter, not the informality of typical emails: The formality of a letter makes a better impression on most politicians than the informal style often used in email messages. Pay attention to spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, etc.
- Use the "To" field (not the "copy" or "blind copy" fields): Place the politician's email address in the "To" field of your email, not in the "copy" (cc) or "blind copy" (bcc) fields, to minimise the risk of your email being treated like spam and automatically deleted or sent to a junk mail folder
- Address a person: Commence with "Dear ...", so your email doesn't look like impersonal/junk mail
- State the topic in the subject line of your email
- Be polite: Be courteous, but don't be afraid to take a firm position. While your representative's job is to represent you, remember that politicians and their staff are people too. Threats, hostile remarks and rude/offensive language are among the fastest ways to alienate people who could otherwise

decide to support your position in light of rational and reasoned argument. Your representative could be in elected office for decades, and could be promoted to higher, more influential, office within their party. Avoid creating enemies

- **Thanks** is as important as criticism: Politicians/political parties need to be able to tell the 'other side' that they have been inundated with calls and letters supporting their position. Write thank you letters to politicians/parties that you know support your position. This will encourage them to stand firm on their position rather than backing down, which has often happened during the passage of proposed laws through Australian parliaments
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- See also: tips for writing letters, most of which also apply to writing email.
- For information on how to address a letter to a member of Parliament, see Form of Address below.

Tips for Telephone Calls.....

- Before phoning about a proposed law, be sure you know the full name of the Bill
- Be prepared to express your comments briefly and concisely
- When you call, give your name and also identify yourself as a constituent when phoning a member of parliament who represents you
- Ask to speak to your representative or their relevant adviser about the [name of Bill, or topic]
- You will probably be put through to a staff member
- Ask that your representative take concrete action, such as supporting or opposing a Bill, or seeking to have their party change its position, etc.
- If they tell you to talk to Minister's office, say that you want your representative to be aware of your concerns and to take the matter up with the Minister and/or their political party
- Be polite
- It is worth following up after your telephone call with a letter or email

Meeting with Officials.....

When meeting with elected officials, use the following tips to make the most of your meeting:

- Make an appointment well in advance
- Go by yourself or, at most, with one other person. If you are going with a group of people, decide on a spokesperson ahead of time
- Dress conservatively and professionally
- Know about the legislator and his or her voting record. Compliment him or her on past achievements.
- Be friendly and positive
- Don't turn down a chance to meet with a legislative aide. Go to the meeting and behave as if you were meeting with an elected official

- Know the title and bill number of the legislation that you want to discuss
- Provide one-page factsheets to give background information
- Don't speak as a member of a national organization
- Don't wear animal rights buttons
- Know your facts
- Don't become emotional and carry on about how animals are suffering and how heartbreaking it is
- Make your points briefly and clearly. Don't waste the legislator's time. Thank him or her, and leave promptly – they are really busy.

Remember that *how* you communicate is as important as *what* you communicate. People who care about animals are often stereotyped as emotional. We can change that image by doing our homework, staying calm and polite, and keeping our statements concise.

Contacting Newspapers (letters to editors).....

Politicians and/or their staff generally monitor the letters pages of newspapers. As well, published letters can raise awareness of an issue among readers who would not otherwise be aware of it. Even if not published, your letter could be instrumental in drawing to the newspaper's attention that the issue is of public concern and should be reported on by their staff.

Keep letters short (most papers have a limit of 200 or 300 words) and include your name, address and phone number (newspapers generally will not print letters unless they are able to contact and confirm the sender).

Some addresses for emailing letters to editors are below (addresses can usually be found on the letters page of the newspaper):

- The Australian: letters@theaustralian.com.au
- The Sydney Morning Herald: letters@smh.com.au
- The Age: letters@theage.com.au
- The Canberra Times: letters.editor@canberratimes.com.au
- The Courier Mail: cmletters@qnp.newsltd.com.au
- The Advertiser: advedit@adv.newsltd.com.au
- The West Australian: letters@wanews.com.au
- The Mercury: mercuryledletter@dbl.newsltd.com.au