

How to lobby your local MP

You pay your tax.
You don't rely on the state.
You serve your community.
Why doesn't parliament ever
focus on your needs?



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Introduction to Lobbying

Why lobby?

In New Zealand you can lobby central government politicians and it's a great way to get messages to our elected officials. Without your vote, your MP is powerless. You can meet or write to your local MP and use your power to make sure they do the right thing.

Many people think that the only way to have power in a democracy, is to vote once every three years. However, by going directly to Members of Parliament, you can ensure that your voice and opinion is heard all year round. The power of personal contact with an MP can never be underestimated. These people are voting and making decisions on behalf of their constituents constantly, and it might be your voice that is resonating in their head when they do so.

What can you expect from the lobbying process?

Relationship building and a change of opinion

Politicians are ordinary people with a range of different interests and opinions about the issues Greenpeace campaigns about. As an active member of the political lobbying network you will, over time, build up a picture as to what your local politicians views are. They in turn will form a view of who you are.

By writing letters and arranging face to face meetings with your politicians you will create pressure on them to do something. Even if they completely disagree with Greenpeace's campaigns it is always worth creating this pressure.

The challenge is to use your relationship with your local politicians to change their views, interests and opinions about the issues Greenpeace campaigns on.

The ladder of involvement

The ladder of involvement is a simple concept about how you persuade politicians to commit to a number of small steps in support of a campaign. As they do so they ascend the ladder, and you can ask them to take more significant steps.

If they are hesitant to take such steps, then as a campaigning organisation, Greenpeace applies other pressure, for instance a simple petition / postcard / letter writing campaign, until hopefully they do take such a step.

As they take more and more steps up the ladder they become increasingly supportive of the campaign until ultimately they become a strong advocate for the change we want to see, pressuring other politicians to do likewise.

This step by step approach works well with the relationship building we hope you will develop from following the campaign asks in the Greenpeace briefings.

- Writing letters and sending a thank you.
- Meeting politicians face to face, again sending them a thank you and
- Perhaps generating some positive publicity in the local paper.
- Developing a relationship over time to the point where they actively contact you about the issues Greenpeace campaigns on.

How can lobbying be made the most effective?

There are 5 key components to effective lobbying from individuals:

Directness and specificity

Don't beat around the bush. Tell your MP up front what they need to do, then briefly state your argument as to why they should do so. We can't just expect MPs to know how to respond appropriately to public awareness campaigns and popular support for social movements. Make your lobbying asks clear, by phrasing these as direct requests.

"I ask that you publicly oppose mining, on Great Barrier, and elsewhere in New Zealand."

Timing

While the issue is hot off the back of a public campaign and is riding on high public support, that's the time to strike with full capacity. Say explicitly that public support is high, and awareness is widespread. This puts the political pressure on MPs to support our cause.

"We know there is a huge amount of support for us because around 50,000 people participated in the March Against Mining last week, here in Auckland Central. Clearly Aucklanders oppose the expansion of mining in our prized conservation estate. Many people are aware of this and feel passionately about the issue."

It's important to remain actively lobbying MPs when the issue has lost public heat, and after your initial contact. The legislative process is cyclical and lengthy, and it's important to be lobbying your MP when the nitty-gritty decisions are actually made. Refer to the 5-Stage Policy Cycle below.

Exploiting MPs' constituency obligations

There is a moral obligation upon MPs to represent the views of their constituents in parliament. Failing to represent the views of their constituents is unethical and antidemocratic. Therefore, making a national campaign a constituency matter is the most effective way of getting an MP to internalise and represent your view in Parliament.

"The Government's plans to expand mining into our highest conservation value areas includes Great Barrier, which, as you know, is annexed to the Auckland Central electorate. Central Aucklanders are united on this, whether we live in Ponsonby, Grey Lynn, the City, or on Great Barrier Island itself; we oppose mining in our backyard."

Building a relationship and making regular contact

Your goal is to "agree to agree" with your MP. Congratulate your MP for things like their party adopting policy you support, or your MP doing something that you feel contributes to our campaigns. Be especially sure to congratulate and thank your MP for doing something you asked them to do – like making a public statement or opposing a Bill etc.

Try to create a basis for politicians to feel comfortable working with you. Then when you lobby against future policies, they will be more sympathetic and will feel the pressure of your efforts more acutely.

“It was really great that you opposed mining on Great Barrier, Nikki. I really appreciate it, and I know everyone who feels so strongly about this does too. Thanks. Now we need to keep working to protect those beautiful areas you and I know are worth a lot more than the quick buck mining could offer. So I want you to oppose the Bill in its third reading.”



Thinking of long-term, national goals; communicating short-term, local goals.

Remember that successful campaigns are won with the combined effort of many fronts; not just one. We should never lose sight of our long term national (and international) goals, but we need to recognise that the most effective way that we, as private individuals, can use the lobbying process is by communicating short-term, local goals.

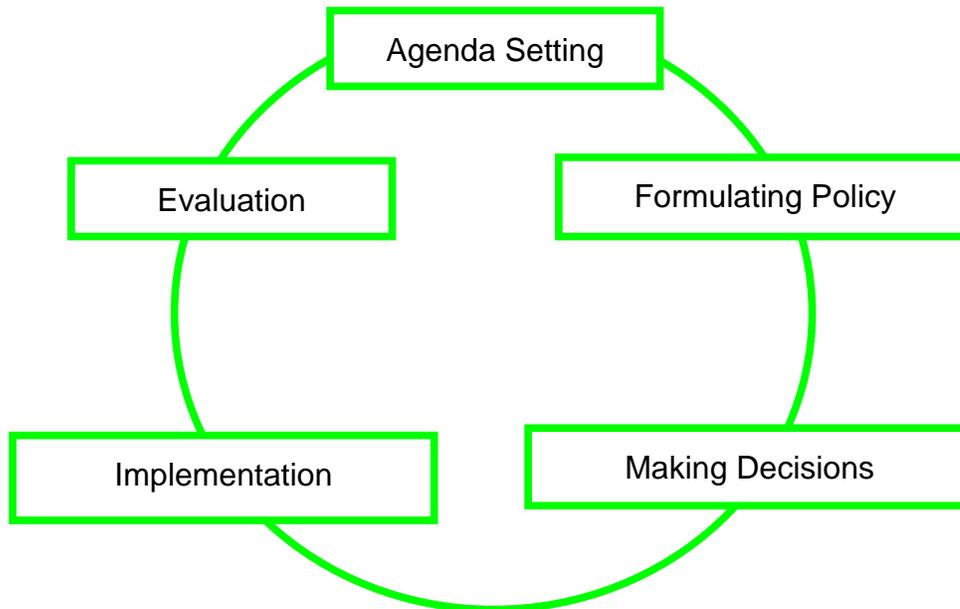
These will get the positive response from the MP we need, firstly to support or oppose something in your area, but secondly to prime them for supporting our national goals.

If our national goal is to “Stop the expansion of all mining in Aotearoa,”

Then you could say:

“Mining on Great Barrier will harm our community by tarnishing the beautiful areas that we should be proud of and need our protection, and will harm bio-diversity. I understand that the economic benefits to the community need to be considered, but any benefit from mining will never outweigh the cost to the environment and to our community. It's not worth it for us, and we need you to put our community first.”

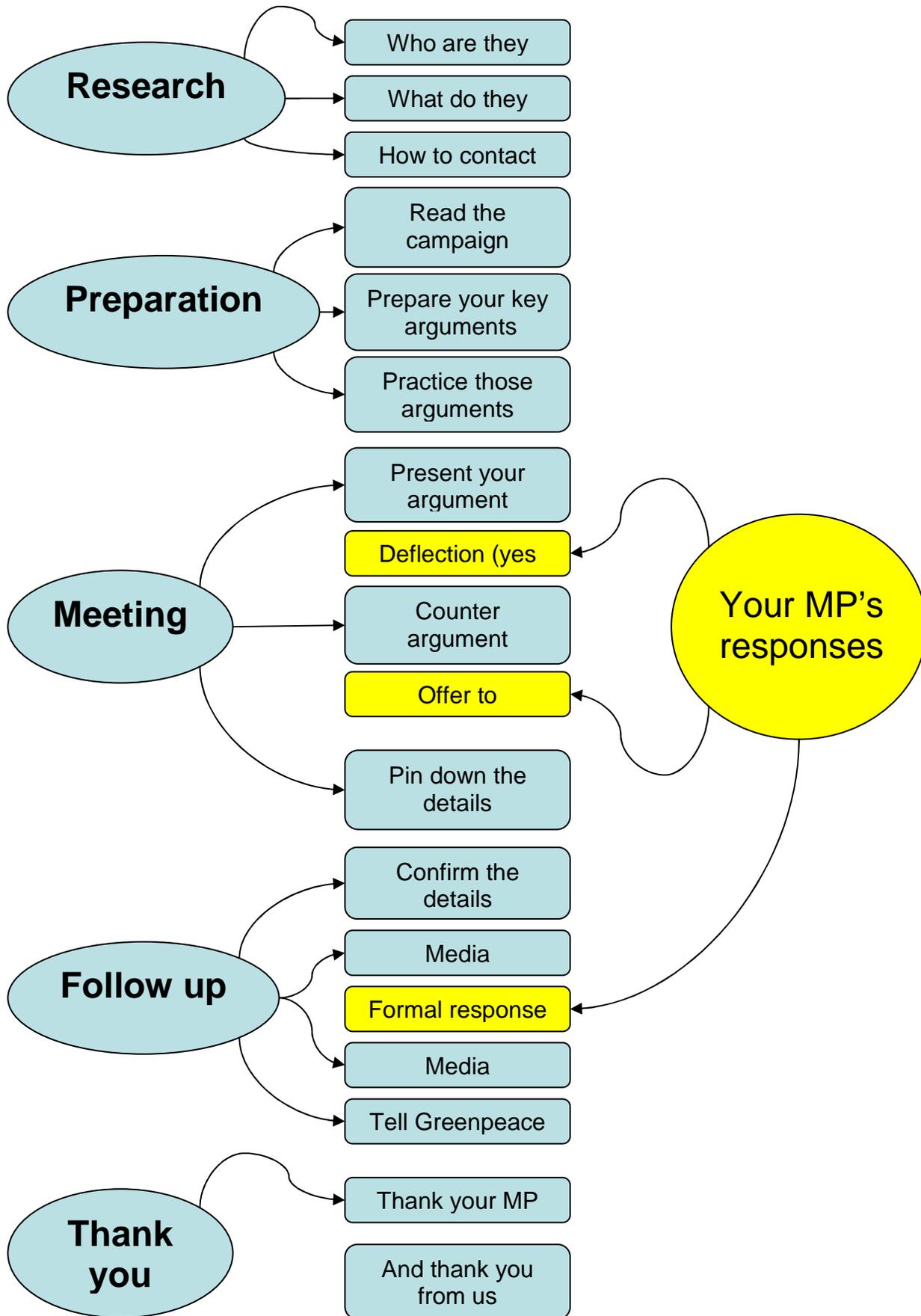
The 5-Stage Policy Cycle (Aotearoa)



The policy cycle is a model to represent how new policy comes about, and how policy changes occur.

- Policy making is “path dependent.”
- This means we need to maintain relationships with key decision makers in order to effectively lobby at each key stage in the policy cycle.
- Otherwise we are in danger of decision makers reverting to the status quo.

The lobbying process



Researching your local MP

Before you meet with any politician, it's useful to find out as much as you can about them, especially in relation to your issue.

Key Resources

Researching your local MP will help you lobby your MP more effectively. With the internet rich in online resources, you can research key information about your MP in a relatively short time frame. Here are some quick links that will set your research in the right direction.

1. Official online government resources

- Official information on current MPs: <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/MPP/MPs/MPs>
- Official information on parliamentary political parties: <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/MPP/Parties>
- Official information index of all aspects of governance in Aotearoa: <http://newzealand.govt.nz>

2. Official political party resources

- Labour Party - <http://www.labour.org.nz>
- National Party 1 - <http://www.national.org.nz>
- National Party 2 - <http://nationalmps.co.nz>
- Green Party - <http://www.greens.org.nz>
- Jim Anderton's Progressive Party - <http://progressives.org.nz>
- United Future New Zealand - <http://www.unitedfuture.org.nz>
- Māori Party - <http://www.maoriparty.org>
- ACT - <http://act.org.nz>
- Individual MPs' pages – e.g. <http://www.nikkikaye.co.nz>

3. Online media resources

- TVNZ - <http://tvnz.co.nz>
- 3News - <http://www.3news.co.nz>
- Herald - <http://www.nzherald.co.nz>
- Stuff - <http://www.stuff.co.nz>
- Scoop - <http://www.scoop.co.nz>

4. Social media resources (including blogs)

- Twitter - <http://twitter.com> – search for your MPs' personal account and 'follow' them.
- Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com> – add your MP as a friend!
- Kiwiblog - <http://www.kiwiblog.co.nz> – David Farrar might not have sympathies that lie with Greenpeace, but his blog has fairly comprehensive (and well archived) information about New Zealand politics.
- Political party blogs – e.g. Red Alert (Labour) - <http://blog.labour.org.nz>

What you need to know

1. Who your MP is

Find out which electorate you live in and who the Member of Parliament for your electorate is. Visit

<http://www.elections.org.nz/mapping> and either enter your address in the left-hand widget, or use the interactive map to find your electorate.

Once you know which electorate you are in, you can find out information about who your MP is and other key information about them at <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/MPP/MPs/MPs>



2. What their contact details are

Members of Parliament (MPs) have two addresses: their parliamentary address, and the address of their electorate office. Depending on which of these you address your letter to, your letter will be received by your MP in very different ways. As a general rule, use your MP's electorate address for local issues, and their parliamentary address for national issues.

The easiest way to find their contact details is through an MP's personal website, e.g. <http://www.davidbennett.co.nz/index.php?/pages/contactform.html>

Electorate MPs and some list MPs will organise regular times where you can either book an appointment to visit them, or (sometimes) simply drop in.

3. The size of their majority

This can be found on an MP's entry in the parliament.nz website. The larger the margin, and the longer the MP has held the seat, the less likely they are to be swayed by marginal interest groups. However, an MP with a newly held seat, or a seat won by a lower margin is more likely to succumb to the pressure of lobbying (done effectively!). Knowing your MP's majority, and who their main opposition is, is vital information for devising your lobbying strategy.

The image shows a screenshot of David Bennett MP's personal website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'HOME', 'PROFILE', 'SPEECHES', 'EVENTS', 'NEWS', 'VIDEO', and 'CONTACT'. Below the navigation bar is a photo of David Bennett, with the caption 'DAVID BENNETT MP for Hamilton East'. To the right of the photo is the 'National' logo and the website 'www.national.org.nz'. Below the photo is a 'Contact Form' section with the text 'Please feel free to contact myself or my team:' and 'Email David directly at: david.bennett@parliament.govt.nz'. Below the contact form is the 'Electorate Office - Hamilton East' section, which includes the name 'Victoria Young, Electorate Agent', the email 'davidbennettmp@parliament.govt.nz', the physical address '510 Grey Street, Hamilton East', the postal address 'PO Box 4183, Hamilton', and the phone number '04 347 4959'. Below this is the 'Parliament Office - Wellington' section, which includes the name 'Caroline Mitchell-Lowe, Executive Assistant', the email 'caroline.mitchell-lowes@parliament.govt.nz', the physical address 'Parliament Buildings, Wellington 6011', and the phone number '04 347 4959'. At the bottom of the contact form section, there is a note: 'Or, you're welcome to use the contact form, below.' To the right of the contact form section are social media links for 'flickr', 'YouTube', and 'facebook'. At the bottom right, there is a link to 'Click here to enrol now...' and a note '2010 local elections Enrol to'.

4. Do they have a specific job/role?

If your local MP is a government minister, a parliamentary secretary, or a party whip, this will change their behaviour towards lobbying.

The select committee process is a vibrant part of the policy cycle in New Zealand. It's where MPs meet to discuss, debate, and hear input into bills that have passed their first reading in parliament. The select committee process is there to improve policy, or to hammer out the nitty-gritty aspects of a complex or controversial process.

Sometimes bills will not make it past their second readings if the select committee report slams the bill. Most often, bills as they appear in their first reading will be substantially changed by the select committee process before they are passed into legislation. This is a *very* good thing!

Find out which select committees your local MP sits on. Usually MPs will sit on committees they have particular interests in or skills that are useful in that policy setting. You may find that your local MP sits on a select committee relevant to the concerns you are raising; meaning that if you lobby effectively, you have a potential direct-representative in the select committee process arguing for your interests.

This information can also be found in an MP's entry at <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/MPP/MPs/MPs>



The screenshot shows the New Zealand Parliament website. The header includes the New Zealand Parliament logo and the text 'NEW ZEALAND PARLIAMENT PĀREMATA AOTEAROA'. Below the header, there is a navigation menu with links to 'Home', 'MPs, parties and electorates', 'Members of Parliament', and 'Current MPs'. The main content area is titled 'Members of Parliament' and 'Current MPs'. It includes a search bar and a table of current MPs. The table has columns for 'Surname, Firstname' and 'Party, Electorate'. The table lists three MPs: Adams, Amy (National Party, Selwyn), Anderson, Jim (Progressive, Wigram), and Ardern, Jacinda (Labour Party, List).

5. The position of the party they belong to

The party in government, or the ruling coalition, is clearly more influential than the opposition. If there is a narrow majority your politician's vote counts more. It pays to know the official position of the party your local MP belongs to with respect to your issue or concern. This is because all MPs who are members of political parties (e.g. Labour, Greens, National) are instructed by the party whip (or equivalent) to vote along party-lines on the third reading of a Bill before Parliament.

MPs, therefore, have to make the tough choice between voting along party lines or voting as the representative of a constituency. It's your job to convince them (if their party position is in opposition to the position you are lobbying for) why your position better reflects the interests of the electorate you live in, and why they should side with 'their electorate' over their party on this issue.

This is a very effective lobbying strategy. Knowing the position of the party they belong to, then, is a vital component of effective research. This information can usually be found on the party's website – e.g. <http://www.greens.org.nz/policy> .

But beware, the major parties (National and Labour) tend to be selective about what policy information they release publicly other than general guiding principles. Minor parties win support because of policy; major parties tend to lose it!

If you can't source factually correct and up-to-date party manifestos, use party buzz-words (like phrasing the immediate need to address climate change as 'inter-generational equality' for Labour, or 'competitive advantage' for National).

6. More in-depth research

The more you know about your politicians, the more influence you can have on them. In addition to the about you can keep an eye out in community publications and the media. If you really want to do your homework, reading the minutes or viewing question time and select committee sessions on Parliament TV are great insights into the behaviour and beliefs of your MP.

- Minutes - <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates>)
- Parliament TV - <http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/AboutParl/SeeHear/PTV>

7. Building up a file / dossier

Please keep this information safe, either electronically or as an old fashioned file.

Collate the articles (especially local media) and print copies of webpages that you find in your (ongoing) research. Remembering where you sourced your information from, and being able to provide a citation to your MP, may prove to be valuable to you.

Write up a quick summary of what you've found out online. Summarise your research into an A4 working document (double-sided at the most). This information should be the most relevant, and you should be able to quickly refer to it for your own benefit, rather than searching through pages of research.

Keep printed and dated copies of all the correspondence you send to your politicians, and the responses you receive. Keep copies of any local media articles that mention key politicians (especially MPs) and write up your notes from any face to face meetings.

8. Summary – relationship building is the ultimate goal

You can spend as much or as little time researching as you have time for. The research process may seem a touch arduous, but after you start your file, it becomes a matter of keeping an eye out and adding things as you go. The better you do at the research stages of the lobbying process, the better your chances of lobbying successfully.

The internet and all the research tools at our disposal are great, but meeting your local MP and having regular contact will help you build the rapport you need to lobby successfully. Research cannot suffice in lieu of a personal relationship. Remember, MPs are humans too, and have human reactions to what you do. If you show you are prepared to build a relationship rather than approaching your MP confrontationally, then you can put your research to better usage.

Meeting your MP

Once you have done your homework by conducting your research, meeting your MP will give you greater ability and powers of persuasion when you to go meet them face to face.

Visiting your MP in person is one of the most effective things you can do because it demonstrates that you feel strongly about an issue. Very few people take the time to visit an MP so they do take notice. MPs often feel isolated, over-lobbied by corporate interests and out of touch so they like meeting 'real people who care about their families and community.' It's also a good way to monitor your politician's attitude on an issue. Making the most of visiting your MP's requires careful thought, preparation and follow-up.

Organising your meeting

Parliament sitting days are Tuesday-Thursday, and electorate MPs will usually do constituency work on Mondays or Fridays. Find out how often these happen, where they happen, and how long it takes to book an appointment (important). Then, write a letter, email or phone your MP's electorate office requesting a meeting.

MPs with ministerial or parliamentary responsibilities have less time to meet with constituents so may be difficult to book. Polite persistence is usually the best strategy.

List MPs do not have constituency obligations, and are not required to have regular sessions with constituents. However, if you approach a list MP with a particular interest in what you are trying to achieve in lobbying, then they may be prepared to arrange a time to meet and discuss your views. These people can be effective representatives in Parliament and during the Select Committee process.

Door-stepping

You can also 'doorstep' your politicians by finding out what events they are planning on attending and going along too (facebook and twitter can be useful for this). Use common sense, and be polite. Being standoffish will not get you anywhere.

Doorstepping can be an effective way of contacting a shy politician. Politicians will usually attend a round of community events each year – such as the Grey Lynn Festival and Big Gay Out in Auckland. These are great opportunities to press for community interests that might otherwise be sidelined.



Preparing for the meeting

Before you go to the meeting make sure:

- You have a copy of supporting materials
- You have a clear ask for your MP. You may ask them to sign a petition, write a letter to the Prime Minister, or raise it with their colleagues.
- You dress appropriately (that is, look respectable). Your MP is judging the whole package, not just what you say (rightly or wrongly, that's how it is).

If you are going to the meeting as a group ensure:

- You all have a good understanding of the issue.
- You have nominated spokespeople for each topic you want to discuss.
- One person is responsible for taking notes during the meeting.



Key components of a successful meeting

The single most important thing you can do during your meeting is build trust and rapport with your MP. If you give the right impression, come across as knowledgeable, reasonable, and passionate, then your MP is more likely to take your request to heart. At the end of the day, being right about something is only one part of the whole package of selling your point of view to your MP, and motivating them to do something.

1. Come in prepared to have a conversation

This is not a lecture, and not a chance to ear-bash your MP with your views. With this attitude, your whole demeanour will change to help build trust and rapport through your body language, voice, facial expressions.

2. Ask meaningful, open-ended questions

For example: “what is your personal stance on the issue?” or “do you have any background interests in the issue?” This can be hugely valuable. Nikki Kaye, for example, has a personal history with Great Barrier Island, and a science background. She cited these as being her main internal motivations for opposing mining on Great Barrier.

3. Be fair, and listen to their reasons for opposing, supporting, or being reluctant to take a stance on your issue.

You are more likely to convince your MP to change their mind if you can gently show them why their opposition or reluctance is misplaced and the benefits of supporting you outweigh these. Coming in with a rehearsed, static, script will prevent you from having the dynamic conversation you need to tailor your conversation to your MP's needs.

4. Find common ground

Having the conversation at their level will make it easier for them to change their mind on an issue, because you can show them that they're not really changing their minds at all! It's better to assure them that your position is more consistent with their beliefs, than to ask them to revise their beliefs.

5. Have fun and relax

Think of this just like any other conversation you have about important issues. MPs have to deal with a lot of people. Mostly crazies or overly emotional sorts. That's why your MP is more likely to like and respect you for coming in and having a relaxed, low-key conversation about an issue you care about than something dry, rehearsed, or over the top.

Leaving the meeting

- Try to get a clear commitment of help from your MP. Don't settle for vague promises.
- After the meeting, write or email to thank the MP for meeting with you and outline what you discussed. In particular, don't let them forget any promises they made!



Letter Writing to MPs

http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/omar_ahmad_political_change_with_pen_and_paper.html
!

Sitting down and writing an original letter to a politician isn't as convenient as sending a form letter or email composed by someone else, but it is much more effective and much more likely to receive a personalised response. Some politicians can [regard emails as "second class mail"](#) and some do not even read email.

Addressing your letter

Members of Parliament (MPs) have two addresses: their parliamentary address, and the address of their electorate office. Depending on which of these you address your letter to, your letter will be received by your MP in very different ways.

Contacts can be found either in the Yellow Pages or www.parliament.govt.nz site.

As a general rule:

- use your MP's electorate address for local issues, and
- their parliamentary address for national issues.

If it's a national issue:

Write to the Member of your electorate, and ask them to pass on the letter to the appropriate Minister. This is more effective as:

- the letter arrives directly from the office of the electorate MP, who is obliged to hear your concerns and pass on the letter to the appropriate Minister;
- this is the more formal channel, and is likely to be prioritised as you are being represented by your MP.

Contents and formatting tips for writing the letter

Layout and headings:

- Include your name and contact details in the top left-hand corner of the page. 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.
- Include their name and contact details underneath on the left-hand side of the page
- **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.

Form of address:

- Dear Prime Minister
- Dear Minister
- Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr (surname)

Contents of letter

Introduction:

State what the issue is and start with a clear statement of purpose and what you want to be done about it. For example:

- "I am writing to urge your support for / opposition to..."
- "I am writing to ask you to support / oppose ..."

Body:

Focus on two or three main points which support your view. Use examples from your research as evidence and flesh them out. This is more effective than attempting to address numerous points in a letter.

Conclusion and requesting action points:

- Reiterate your view expressed in the introduction
- Pick one strong example from your letter to back up your point
- Ask for the politician to respond to your letter by
 - Writing a response back to you
 - Organising a meeting with you
 - Taking concrete action on the issue ie talking with someone, raising the issue with their party, voting to support a bill etc.

Sign off with a salutation, e.g. regards, yours sincerely

Other important tips:

- **Keep it brief:** Letters should be no longer than one page and should be about one issue only. Be as concise as possible. 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.
- **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).
- **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. Use formal language but remember you are expressing your point of view, so phrases like 'I feel' and 'I want to see' are good to include.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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. Be polite - being abusive or offensive won't do you any favours - you can be firm and state your case without being rude.
- **Empower others to write:** Most of all get your friends, acquaintances, family members, work colleagues, passing strangers, all writing.

Writing an email to an MP

Email is by far the least effective way of communicating your views to your representative/s. 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:

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" (c.c.) or "blind copy" (b.c.c.) 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.

Keep the irritation factor low: Avoid accusing/criticising the wrong politicians/party.

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.