

Meeting with MPs

Securing the meeting

- Call. Don't leave it to an email which can be overlooked. If you do email through some info, be sure to follow up with a phone call.
- Keep calling. If they tell you they will call back, wait for a day or two and call them if you haven't heard anything.
- Be persistent (polite, but persistent)
- If someone in your group has an 'in' (e.g. member of the party, good relationship with the MP through other groups and campaigns) use them as your contact person
- Give a short, clear reason for the meeting and frame it in a way that sounds collaborative and constructive (e.g. "We have some concerns about the proposed XXX legislation that Ms MP will need to vote on soon, and we wanted to discuss them with her.", or "We've been meeting with community groups in our electorate and undertaking surveys on people's views we thought Mr MP would be interested in discussing the findings.")
- Be friendly and positive, not adversarial and accusatory

Planning

- Select 2 – 4 people to attend the meeting, no more
- Choose one or two key issues to focus on. Don't try to cover too much ground. You will usually only be given 30 minutes.
- The voices of people affected by the issues should be front and centre – Include people with lived experience if possible and if they feel comfortable and safe to be part of the meeting. If not, then take along some examples (general and de-identified) of how the issues to be discussed affect real people.
- Any people who are seeking asylum or refugees in your team should have control over what happens in the meeting. They can politely state that they are not comfortable answering some questions the MP may ask, and they can decline photo requests etc.
- Take a few notes with you, in case the MP asks you to provide further info/evidence/examples etc.

In the meeting

- Thank the MP for their time
- Be friendly and polite.
- Give credit where credit is due (e.g. "Thank you for speaking out about xxx recently.", or "We are really happy to see xxx in your party's policy.")
- Stay focused. Don't be distracted off to other issues or drawn into futile arguments (e.g. "Yeah we probably won't ever agree on that, but that's not what we want to talk about today. The thing we want to discuss today is...")
- Stick to your key messages and frame your statements in a way that makes them difficult to argue against (e.g. "We just want people to be treated fairly.")
- Provide information on how the issues affect real people
- If there are people seeking asylum in your team, be attentive to their cues and follow their lead to ensure they feel safe and comfortable throughout the discussion
- Have a specific ask. Be clear about what you would like the MP to do on this issue
- Identify a benefit to the MP (e.g. "A lot of youth have enrolled to vote due to the Marriage Equality postal vote. Our data/petition/attendance at events shows that the youth in this electorate are very concerned about offshore detention....")

Follow up

- Send a thank you email, including the dot points from the discussion and any actions agreed to, along with supporting information. Copy in the staffer who attended the meeting (they will usually give you their card).
- Follow up further, to check on progress of actions