

# How to visit a Politician

Visiting a politician is one of the most powerful things you can do. It carries much more weight than signing a petition, sending a postcard, making a phone call or even sending a letter. It is not difficult to visit an MP, yet very few people in Australia have done it. However, to make your visit as successful as possible, here are some suggestions to help.

## *Before you go*

### 1. Know your politician

Make sure you know your MP's name, party and electorate.

### 2. Know your issue

Make sure that you are clear on the key points you want to make, and the action you would like the MP to take.

### 3. Know your objectives

Attached are some ideas for specific issues

### 4. Organise your delegation

It is good to visit an MP in a group. Others can give you confidence and might be able to think of other points to raise. About three is the ideal number.

### 5. Make the appointment

Call the politician's local electorate office. Tell the office how many will be coming and what groups they are from. Half an hour is normal meeting length.

## *During the Visit*

### 1. *Be neat and presentable*

Politicians may react negatively to anyone dressed in a messy, radical or unkempt way. This will turn them against your cause, regardless of the worth of your ideas.

### 2. *Be early*

Make sure everyone in your delegation knows where the politician's office is and ask them to meet outside there, 15 minutes early.

### 3. *Be friendly, polite and patient and don't get side-tracked*

Remember your outline and objectives and make sure you get to raise the issues you intended to. Find out her/his views on the issue - this is important. Ask how her/his work is going. Be nice - don't just push your own concerns.

### 4. *Ask the MP what s/he would be prepared to do*

It is very important that you are able to draw a commitment from the MP. This means you will have to get back in touch with her/him and vice-versa. Ask the MP what action s/he would be prepared to do, in order to take the issue further.

Some suggestions you could make are:

*make a public statement, (take a draft statement with you)*

*talk to a minister on your behalf,*

*write a letter raising your concerns, (take a draft letter with you, so that the politician only needs to sign it)*

*ask a question in Parliament,*

*raise the issue at a party meeting.*

### 5. *Thank them for the visit and leave some information*

Regardless of the outcome, thank her/him again for the opportunity to meet with her/him and to air your concerns. Leave a copy of the information about the issue.

## *After the Visit*

### 1. Debrief

Talk it over with your group. Discuss what worked, what didn't, what could have been better done.

### 2. Follow up

Make sure the MP honours any commitment to you. If you don't hear anything within a week or so, phone or write, and keep on it until it is resolved.

### 3. Communicate with your Diocesan Contact who has organised your lobbying

This is important so that the ACSJC knows who has been seen and what sort of response is being given. This feedback is essential for a successful strategic campaign.

### 4. Get ready for the next one!

Now that lobbying has been shown to be a lot easier than you first thought, remember that it gets easier again every time you do it.