

# Communications Toolkit



Last updated: 27 March 2019

This toolkit is designed to support farmers seeking to raise awareness of the need for climate action. Specifically it provides advice on how to:

- [Write a letter or email to your local MP](#)
- [Call your MP](#)
- [Hold a meeting with your local MP](#)
- [Write a letter-to-the-editor](#)
- [Engage on social media](#)

It also highlights some [advice on common climate mythbusting](#), [tips for talking about climate](#) and [when and when not to represent Farmers for Climate Action](#).

We also recommend you check out the [FAQs](#) page on our website.

Please note: this document is regularly updated. Updated versions will be regularly saved in [this folder](#).

## **But first, why should you make yourself heard?**

Climate change is the greatest threat we currently face. Report after report shows that this is the critical decade to ensure future generations can enjoy the same nature and planet we currently do.

As farmers, we are on the frontlines of climate change. We are already experiencing the increase in droughts and unpredictable weather. Wheat yields have already declined, the belt of land in Australia available for broadscale cropping is shifting south, and yet still our politicians bicker rather than take action.

Farmers are some of the most trusted voices in the climate space and we have a unique chance to shift the debate on climate. For too long conservative politicians have blocked genuine climate action. A movement of voices from regional Australia calling for action on climate change could be a game changer.

Your voice is incredibly powerful in the climate debate.

## Write a letter to, or email, your local MP

You can search for the contact details of your local Member [here](#). You may also like to consider your' state's Senators, or the Ministers for Agriculture, Environment or Energy.

### Advice on content

- Try to speak to the most influential person available - i.e. the MP's policy advisor or chief of staff - this might not be possible in some regional offices, but it's best to aim high
- Keep it short and focussed on one issue
- Draw from a respected report to strengthen your argument. Links to useful resources to draw from are included on our [FAQ page](#).
- Make it personal - explain why you care, but be sure to remain calm and respectful
- Ask your PM to take a specific action, i.e. vote against a particular Bill, speak about the issue or ask a question in Parliament, raise the issue with relevant MPs, talk about the issue in the media

### Sample letter

The great folks at Climate Council suggest a letter structure like the below for MP letters (Climate Council, [Climate Action Toolkit](#), p. 11).

1 November 2018

Dear [Mr/Mrs/Ms First Name Last Name MP OR Senator Last Name]\*,

1. Introduce yourself (and if you are a constituent, let them know!).
2. Identify the issue you are concerned about.
3. Use some information from the Climate Council's report, e.g. "If the Galilee Basin were a country on its own, it would emit more than 1.3 times Australia's current annual emissions from all sources and rank in the top 15 emitting countries in the world."
4. Explain in your own words why this issue concerns. You could:
  - > Use a personal story.
  - > Link the problem to past, current, or future impacts on the community.
  - > Voice your support for alternative options (in the case of coal, you could talk about the economic, social, and environmental benefits of renewable energy).
5. Tell your MP what you want them to do (e.g. vote for/against a proposal).

I await your response with anticipation.

Kind Regards,

Your Name

## Call your MP

Calling your MP is another great way to get your message across.

### 8 top tips

1. Plan ahead - find out what their position is on climate change and energy. What is the ask you want to make of them? What are the points you want to get across?
2. Introduce yourself - give your full name, note that you live in the electorate and say you want to talk about climate action (or more specific issue)
3. Share your story - how and why is climate action important for you? What challenges does it present?
4. Key messages - draw in the points you developed before the call
5. Be polite - it's important to keep the conversation respectful if you want to get your message across
6. Get to the point - try not to confuse the issue by going off on a tangent and try to keep it short
7. Be honest - say so if you don't know the answer and let them know you'll find out and get back to them
8. Make an ask - as in the letters advice

## Hold a meeting with your local MP

We want to make sure MPs know voters care about climate change. Much of Australia is locked in drought and the latest IPCC report shows we need to act now to provide a safe climate for future generations. We need to make sure climate change is in the minds of our MPs.

It can take a few weeks (or more) to confirm a meeting time with your MP, so make sure you get in early if there's an important date coming up. If you want to meet before an election, request the meeting before the election is called. If you can't get a meeting until later, don't panic - this is an ongoing campaign with ongoing relationships. If this is your first meeting, it should not be the last! MPs are busy and need to respond to urgent issues and their diaries change a lot. Don't be put off if your meeting gets cancelled, shortened or rescheduled at late notice – be polite but persistent!

### First step: Get in touch!

We'd love to help and possibly come along. Email Cam at [info@farmersforclimateaction.org.au](mailto:info@farmersforclimateaction.org.au) with details of what you're thinking.

### Second step: Draft a letter

- If you've not met with the MP before, make sure to include a few pertinent details about yourself, your electorate and your personal reason for being concerned about climate change (i.e. I'm a farmer from Maranoa and I'm concerned about the way climate

change is making it difficult for me to farm). Also make a note of your role within your community and your community's concerns

- State your request for a meeting and the date range you're available.
- Explain why you want to meet with them
- Ask their office to contact you arrange a suitable time
- Note anyone else you would like to bring along (this can be vague, i.e. other constituents who are volunteering with you)
- Sign off with your name and contact details

### **Third step: Make a phone call**

- MPs receive a lot of emails. Once you've sent the email, follow up with a phone call to make sure it doesn't slip through the cracks

### **Fourth step: Plan your meeting agenda**

It's best to call ahead of time and ask how long your MP's office has allocated for your meeting. MPs are busy people - it would be a shame if you prepared for an hour-long meeting if you only have 20 minutes!

1. Get each person to introduce themselves and share a 1 minute story of why they care about our living world.
2. Show you've done your research – congratulate them on something they've done well on climate, or something they may have said publicly about their values, and ask whether they agree we need to act more urgently to stop climate pollution.
3. Share with your MP the things you have been doing in your community. Things like how many people you have spoken to; how many people volunteered to survey your community with you; and how many people were persuaded to use their vote to stop climate damage are all excellent things to share!
4. Give some more context about what our policy demands are. We are asking MPs to support a national strategy for climate change and agriculture. As well as a rollout of more clean energy
5. Put the ask to your MP. Here's what you should ask them to actually do:
  - Publicly speak out (in the media, in parliament, write to your leader, or on social media) in support of the above demands – and let you know when they do.
  - Publicly advocate for your party to change its position on these demands, or raise the issues in the party room
  - Take a photo with you and share it with their commitment to do the above
6. Listen to what your MP has to say about the asks and policy demands. Take notes so you can check whether the things they're saying are already party policy.

7. Thank your MP for their time and let them know your next steps.

#### **Fifth step: The meeting**

- Turn up on time!
- Follow the agenda
- Send a thank you email after you're done

## **Write a letter-the-editor**

You are encouraged to write letters to the editor in response to recent letters to the editor regarding the need for climate action.

#### Advice on content

- Open with a greeting, using the editors name if you know it
- Make it interesting: Try to capture the reader's attention from the very first sentence. If writing in response to another letter or article, cite its date and title.
- Make a convincing case: try to be persuasive and back up your facts with solid evidence.
- Make a call to action: Be clear about what you want done about a particular issue
- Priority areas to discuss: Farmers for Climate Action is evidence based and supports a transition to zero carbon economy. Key priority areas to mention include:
  1. The need for a transition to clean, renewable energy
  2. Support for a national strategy on climate and agriculture
  3. Supporting emissions reductions in line with the Paris Agreement
- Keep it short: Your letter has a better chance of making it into the newspaper in its entirety if it is 250 words or less in length. Editors may edit or shorten letters to ensure they fit the space that is available on the letters page, so write a draft, proofread, cut and tighten up your language as much as possible - aim for brevity, short sharp sentences.
- Sign off with your name and contact details (they won't publish your contact details but may need to contact you to follow up or verify your identity)

**During an election campaign: During an election letters-to-the-editor are a great way to get climate on the agenda in your local seat. Avoid negative commentary on other electoral candidates, and stay positive throughout your letter. Letters that spend too much time discussing opposing candidates can have the effect of consolidating those candidates' profile in the community.**

## Engage on social media

One of the least time-intensive way to get the message out about climate is through social media.

Ways you can get involved:

- Follow Farmers for Climate Action on Facebook and Instagram and like/share our posts
- Follow @Farmingforever on Twitter and love/share our tweets
- Write your own posts and tweets and tag us!

Personal posts on Facebook can be a powerful way of communicating about climate. You can write to your friends but you might also like to consider making the odd post public. If you're doing this, write from the heart about why climate action is important to you, your farm business and your community and consider including a photo of yourself on farm. Let us know if you do this as we can help respond to comments/queries - [info@farmersforclimateaction.org.au](mailto:info@farmersforclimateaction.org.au).

## Tips for talking about climate

One-on-one conversations with family, friends and acquaintances is another great way to raise awareness of climate change. Below are some tips on having climate conversations.

### Do:

- Localise the problem: how is climate change impacting your region and your farm business
- Make the problem immediate - this is not just a problem for future generations
- Focus on the potential impact on people
- Emphasise how widespread concern about climate is
- Focus on solutions - we have the answers, we just need to act
- Draw attention to the benefits of renewable energy (and give examples)

### Don't:

- Talk about 'belief' - the facts have now been established
- Refer to a 'debate' - see reason above
- Bamboozle your audience with long lists of facts

## Common climate mythbusters

One of the things you will be keen to do is have conversations with your friends and family about climate change! You've probably found already there are a selection of climate myths that tend to come up again and again.

Here are some places to go when thinking about how to respond:

There is so much out there! The Climate Council is a good starting point:

<https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/2018-19-angry-summer-infographic/>

<https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/summer-bbq-guide-talking-energy/>

The [Skeptical Science page](#) is great - it was started by John Cook as a way of responding to his father-in-law's skepticism.

[Bill Nye](#) (the science guy) has some great explainers on YouTube

NASA has some great resources [here](#) and [here](#). [This page](#) has some great graphics, but possibly too detailed:

You are also very welcome to use the resources on our [website](#).

## When should I represent Farmers for Climate Action?

Farmers for Climate Action is at its heart a movement of farmers and we'd love you to represent us. Before publicly representing us, please do check in with us first. Our reputation is key to our success and we need to make sure we're all on the same page.

If representing us, please:

- Always remain respectful and non-partisan when acting on behalf of FCA
- Be evidence based when talking about climate and climate change
- All media opportunities and interviews specifically around the 2018 electorate working groups must be approved by either Fiona Davis ([fiona@farmersforclimateaction.org.au](mailto:fiona@farmersforclimateaction.org.au)) or Verity Morgan-Schmidt ([verity@farmersforclimateaction.org.au](mailto:verity@farmersforclimateaction.org.au))
- Agree to abide by FCA's values when representing the organisation. These values are, integrity, innovation, stewardship, equity and justice.

## The climate action checklist

We've presented a number of ways you can support our campaign for climate action on and off-farm. Here is a quick checklist of the methods outlined here and some others you may want to consider.

- Contact an MP
- Meet with an MP
- Write a letter-to-the-editor
- Support climate action on social media
- Have a conversation about climate action
- Write an opinion editorial (email [fiona@farmersforclimateaction.org.au](mailto:fiona@farmersforclimateaction.org.au))
- Learn about and implement climate smart agricultural practices on-farm
- Other .....