

# Guide to Meeting Your MP/Senator for GetUp Action Groups

Firstly, it's important to think about WHY you want to meet your local MP or Senator. Some possible reasons are:

- To lobby on a specific issue and request a specific action
- To raise awareness of your local GetUp action group and your activities in the community
- To build a relationship with the MP

This will determine how you write your meeting request, and prepare for your meeting.

## Requesting a Meeting

Send an email or snail mail including these points:

- Who you are
- That you're requesting a meeting on behalf of the GetUp Action Group, and a sentence or two about the group (for example, how long you've been going and the size of your membership)
- What electorate/s you are in
- A brief outline of what you want to discuss

After sending the email, follow up with a phone call. You can ask to speak to the diary manager, who may have to get back to you to confirm the time. Wait about 10 days and follow up with a phone call. Your meeting will have to be scheduled around [Parliamentary sitting dates](#). If you do not get a reply, call again in another week or so.

## Planning the Meeting

- Delegate someone in the action group to lead the planning for the meeting
- Work with your local organiser
  1. Tell them well in advance. They need to know what you are doing, and will help with planning and resources.
  2. Copy all the correspondence with the MP to your organiser
  3. With some advance notice, your staff organiser can give you an up-to-date report on GetUp in your electorate, for example: how many members, how many actions taken, how much money donated, what issues members care about (from the survey).
  4. A week or so beforehand, check with your organiser again; there may be burning recent issues that could be added to the meeting.

## Preparing for the Meeting

Make one person the leader of your delegation, who will do the introductions, watch the time, and help keep the discussion on track.

If you have time, practice the presentation with your group. This will increase your confidence and help the presentation to be clear and run on time.

### Know the Issue/s

If you are lobbying about an issue, keep it simple. It is tempting to tell the MP everything you know, but this will minimise the effectiveness of your meeting. Work out five things in advance:

1. Two or three main points about the issue
2. Brief, clear description of why these are important
3. Add a personal touch: why you care about the issue, and/or tell a story about an individual person or family that are affected
4. Relevance to the MP's electorate; eg what people in the electorate think about the issue, how many members of your organisation are in the electorate, what actions you undertake in the electorate
5. What action you would like the MP to do

### Know your MP

Research your MP's profile, including their parliamentary appointments, committee memberships, speeches and any involvement with your issues. Most of this information is found on this website:

[www.aph.gov.au/Senators\\_and\\_Members/Parliamentarian\\_Search\\_Results](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Parliamentarian_Search_Results)

Each State will have a similar resource for members of State Parliaments.

### Who should attend

A group of between 2 and 4 people is best. Smaller groups are better for relationship building.

Ensure that everyone has prepared a brief introduction, including what motivates them to be active, so that the MP is clear about who they are meeting with.

Wear comfortable and respectable clothing. Nothing too flashy or distracting.

### Ask for a commitment

Ask the MP for something that they will be able to do. It is very important that you have a clear ask of your meeting. Choose one of the following depending on the Senator/MP meeting you are having and what you think they will agree to (be ambitious).

Some suggestions:

- Raise the issue at their party caucus
- Contact the relevant Minister on your behalf
- Take the issue up in a Parliamentary Committee
- Speak or ask a question in Parliament about the issue
- Speak at one of your events

- Make a public comment on social media about their views
- Vote for or against a Bill (especially if they are in a minor party or an independent)

You may feel that you are getting the brush-off, but that is not necessarily the case. Keeping the issue live will be noticed and contributes to changes even when it may not feel like it at the time.

## In the Meeting

MPs have a lot of meetings, so most are about 30 minutes or less. The process is usually welcome, introductions, presenting the issues, discussion, call to action and follow-up.

### Meeting dynamics:

- Ideally, you want a friendly meeting that leaves you with a personal connection with your MP.
- Do not talk all the time. Aim for an equal conversation. Really listen to what the MP says, and invite them to ask you any questions.
- Stay polite, even if it becomes obvious that the MP is disinterested or disagrees with your issues.
- If the MP asks you a question you cannot answer, do not fudge. Say you do not know and will send the information to them after the meeting.
- Sometimes the MP does not attend and leaves you with a staff member. Be friendly and respectful and still take the meeting. If you connect well with the staff member they may promote your issue to the MP. Then ask to arrange a later meeting with the MP.
- Be clear that you're representing your local GetUp Action Group in the meeting. If the MP asks a question about the GetUp wide position on particular issue, that you can't answer, say that you'll get back to them.

## Note taking

It is a good idea for one person to note the main points from the meeting. Do this casually rather than obsessively.

## What to leave with the MP

Prepare a one page list of points. You can go through this at the meeting and leave it behind as a reminder. You can also leave a small pack of resources with further information, ie brochures or fact sheets with nice graphs or figures.

For the Defend Democracy campaign, we recommend bringing along GetUp's submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters Inquiry into the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform) Bill 2017.

You can find and download the submission [here](#).

## **Taking Photos**

You can ask the MP for permission to take a photo of your delegation with the MP. If they agree, they may want a copy to use for their own newsletter or website. If you have a prop, such as a banner or an object, this will make the photo more interesting, and more likely to be used.

## **After the Meeting**

1. Debrief with each other
2. Follow up with the MP. Write and thank them for meeting with you, and politely remind them of what they agreed to do.