

Celebration: how to recognise our impact

Celebrating our achievements helps us build connect to our impact

Celebration is an activist skill

In June 2013 Plan to Win held a Melbourne Campaigners' Network session on a grim rainy night but it was totally heartwarming! We shared stories of success – big or small, recent or distant. Activists are often so focused on problems. We're used to battle and struggle. Unfortunately many of us have experienced defeat. Even when we do win it can be hard to take it in as we rush on to the next challenge. It felt so good to change focus and soak in good news for two hours. It made me think we need to do this much more often, and weave it into our habits and gatherings.

What can we celebrate?

- Achieving the campaign's objective – winning!
- Not winning the overall goal but taking a step in the direction
- Holding ground – stopping things getting worse
- Completion of tactics, even if the desired outcome is not achieved
- Shifting public debate and power relationships
- Building power eg recruiting people, developing capacity and leadership
- Empowering people – increasing agency and the sense that change is possible

Why do we celebrate?

- To consolidate the movement and build momentum
- To learn that it's worth fighting – and to teach others too
- To acknowledge people's contribution
- To hold us until the next win
- To engage people on the periphery of our movement
- To keep the story of a win alive, to mark the time and honour people
- To fight erasure from history (our opponents won't attribute wins to us)
- Because it feels good and we deserve it!

How do we celebrate?

- Party!
- Award nights and other ways of appreciating people
- Rituals and habits – for example starting a gathering with a round of success stories
- Document the struggle – case studies, oral history, getting support from academics and archivists
- Plaques – mark the place, such as the parks in Sydney that were saved by the Green Bans
- Holding a celebration rally to demonstrate power
- Hope stories – use the story of success to encourage others to take action, to build faith in collective action and the idea that change is possible
- Claim wins longterm through materials and commemoration
- Add your own...

Source: Holly Hammond, Plan to Win