



# Tip Sheet - How to meet with politicians

## Organising a Meeting

The first step in arranging a meeting with your local MP is to write a short letter or email requesting to meet, with a short summary of the issues you would like to discuss. You'll find a template for an initial meeting below. Locate the correct details for your local Member by searching google for the Parliament they are in (i.e. either NSW Parliament, Federal Parliament etc). Follow the links to your MP's contact details. Once you have sent your email/letter, it's wise to follow up with a phone call 5-7 days later if you haven't heard back, to organise a time and date.

## Planning the Meeting

It is generally useful to have 2 to 3 people attend a meeting with a local MP. Any more than that and it can become very unwieldy. Preferably, select 2 to 3 community members with good people skills and a broad knowledge of the issues. Have a planning session several days before the meeting. This enables you to plan which approach you will take. You'll need to work out:

- Who will speak about what?
- What materials will you take (e.g. a one page briefing note summarising issues, a map etc.)?
- What are the key messages you want to get across (i.e. specific policy changes; that the balance has shifted too much towards mining, against land, water and communities etc)?
- How can you demonstrate support for your issue (media coverage, your group's successes, event attendance, door-knocking in the electorate)?
- What action or question are you asking (i.e. that they support your key issues, and will take them up with the relevant Ministers and Leaders)?

## At the Meeting

The most important thing when meeting Members of Parliament is to engage respectfully at all times, and to focus on providing them with the information they need to support your cause. You are NOT there to argue with your MP - you are there to help inform them of the issues, to form a good working relationship with them, and to give them the tools they need to support you. The tone of a meeting is possibly the most important aspect - so it's essential that you are friendly and polite...so that you'll get another meeting later.

It's important to take into the meeting a set of up to three concrete requests that you are going to ask your MP. Have these written down and clearly thought out before you go into the meeting, and bring the meeting back to discuss these before the meeting finishes. They can be as simple as asking them to raise the matter with the relevant Minister or the Leader of their Party.

Start the meeting positively. Congratulate the MP on their election, and say how hopeful you are about working with them to get much needed improvements for mining-affected communities. Give the MP a copy of your briefing note, and step them through it - a great way to make sure that you stay focused on the key points. Try to stick with your plan for the meeting, even if the MP is going off track. Gently bring it back to your plan and your briefing note.

If, in the unlikely event, the MP becomes angry or aggressive, it's best to respond gently and by going back to the issues and the legitimate concerns that you are putting in front of them, as a community member from their electorate.

## After the Meeting

Follow up with a summary email, thanking the MP for meeting with you and outlining your key messages and requests. This can be an opportunity to send through extra information on topics covered (e.g. health and environmental impacts).

Follow up with phone call asking about actions taken since the meeting: if the MP agreed to do something for you (like make contact with other MPs or Ministers, talk to the media or find out some information) call them 5-7 days after the meeting and ask if they have done so.

Let the rest of your group and other members of your regional alliance know what your MP said in the meeting, and what they have been saying in the media.

### Template Meeting Request

MP Name

MP Address

Date

Dear (insert name),

I am writing to request a meeting with you as a local constituent in your electorate.

I am concerned about the impacts of coal and unconventional gas mining on communities and land and water resources.

Our amazing environment, clean land and water sets our country apart, and it forms the basis of our health and our livelihoods.

But all is not well. Mining giants and multi-national corporations have too much influence, and the laws have been stacked heavily in their favour and against farmers and the environment.

People are no longer getting a fair go, and community health, land and water are all at risk from unsafe and inappropriate coal and gas mining.

Therefore, we are seeking some important regulatory reforms to better protect communities and the environment from mining.

We would like to request a meeting with you, at a suitable time, to discuss these issues and provide you with a community perspective on the impacts they are having.

Please contact myself, (insert name), on (insert phone) or (email) to organise a time to meet.

We look forward to working with you in the future on these important matters.

Yours sincerely,

Your name

Name of your group

Address