



Tip Sheet - Effective Action Groups

An Action Group works together to win a campaign. Lock the Gate member groups are as varied as our movement. They are large or small; informal or formal; some are incorporated, but many are not. They're in rural districts, regional towns, and big cities. Sometimes, keen and active people from Mining Free communities join together to form a group from that locality. Even a small Action Group can add enormous value to the campaign.

Check out the groups page on our website: www.lockthegate.org.au/group_membership. This is where you can register your group with Lock the Gate, so that you are connected to the movement and people can find you. The only thing that Lock the Gate asks is that you choose a unique name for your group (i.e. don't use the words 'Lock the Gate'.)

Action Groups are the engines of the campaign. To win, we need groups that get on with campaign action; that attract and retain new people; and that help new people find *the thing they can do*. It's wonderful that so many groups spring up. Many are effective and inclusive. A few get bogged down in worry-talk, and struggle to take action. Many factors come into play. The main thing is to learn together how to decrease worry-talk, while increasing action.

Want to win? Then group up everyone!

In groups, we're so much smarter than a collection of individuals: we have *collective intelligence*. When you engage with others in groups, you take the campaign to a whole new level: the impossible becomes possible. Our social movement power comes from self-organising groups. It's a grass-roots movement in which many thousands of people learn together how to campaign. Campaign gold is achieved when several nimble Action Groups collaborate in a regional alliance. Suddenly the campaign capability increases many times over.

Action groups can shift to 'campaign speed'

Because Action Groups *self-organise*, they can generate action relatively easily, in a way that suits their capacity. If they avoid choke points (see below) they can increase the tempo. Action Groups need to be nimble, inclusive and productive. Whereas club committees (such as football clubs) have formal structures and can take a leisurely time to do things, Action Groups can punch the work out fast and run at *campaign speed*, not *club speed*. See the **tip sheet on Good Meetings** for how to keep your group in good shape.



Some ideas for Action Groups

Mobilize the community and build the supporter base: the number 1 task of movement building

- **Run a weekly stall.** Sell t-shirts to raise funds. Sell LTG stickers and signs. Collect contacts of supporters for your group and for Lock the Gate. Have as many conversations as you can.
- **Liaise with LTG Coordinators** to add value to campaigns
- **Collect contact details of people who want updates from your group and for Lock the Gate.** Do this at every opportunity – it's how we build a big supporter base. Lock the Gate does not send frequent emails – but to win, we need strength at local, regional and national scale. The role of Lock the Gate is to do the things that local groups find difficult (films, resources, training and coordinated calls to action for political impact).
- **Form a working group to get the 'Mining Free Communities' process running.** This is incredibly valuable for building the movement in the rural districts (although it's not suitable for larger towns). It will give your campaign traction. It's a bit of an art-form so contact your local regional LTG Coordinator or communities@lockthegate.org.au.
- **Put on a short film in the local hall.** There are many films, and many ways to re-engage communities. After the film, gather together those who want to work together to stop the mining threat.
- **Support individuals from adjoining towns who want to form an Action Group.** See the tip sheet *Create a Town Action Group*, and lend your experience to support adjoining communities.
- **Work with others to leaflet your town.** Some have been leafleted 4 times to swing the networks our way.
- **Make sure people have talkback radio numbers in their phone contacts.** Encourage them to call. Run a role-play session to increase confidence.
- **Experiment with door knocking.** Face-to-face conversation is powerful. As you door knock, offer the Lock the Gate DVD (see below for the cheapest way to reproduce this). Don't forget to collect contacts!
- **Have a sign-painting stall at the market.** Provide an easel, paints and old corflutes or cardboard. Invite the public to paint their own sign. Talk while they're doing it. See if they want to get involved. Don't forget to collect contacts!
- **Have a regular column in your local free community newsletter** (if you have one).
- **Create enjoyable social time.** A group that laughs together stays together. Joy is infectious and keeps us going.
- **Invite new people to do 'Read it-Write it-talk' it as an induction pathway.** Some may not want to do it, but for others it might help them build their confidence. (Ask for the Tipsheet)
- **Learn how to write Call to Action emails.** Segment your email list into the active people and supporters. Don't bombard your supporters, but send them the occasional, skillful (and short) call to action. Build pressure on decision-making and policy. See the tipsheet on *Smart Emails*.
- **Collaborate with other groups to do a 'flash mob' when a Minister visits.** This is a positive pop-up action with banners. If a roadside flash mob, have 'toot your support' signs. Smile and wave at motorists that engage.
- **Make creative signs for trees and farms.** Get our message out there for visiting politicians to see.
- **Have a Soup and Letter Writing night.** Ask everyone to bring a friend. Write letters to MPs and newspapers. Link these new people to your local group and LTG by collecting contacts.
- **Make an appointment to talk with your MP.**
- **The Knitting Nannas Against Gas hold knit-ins outside MP offices.** They increase the political heat, have fun, raise awareness, collect contacts, and run petitions and raffles.
- **Write submissions, but be mindful that these have their limitations.** Some groups have found their energies entirely consumed with detailed submissions, and have lost touch with how to mobilise their community.
- **Raise funds for your campaign.** You can't win without funds. The sky's the limit.

Review what your group is like for new people

A new person might be bewildered by technical information, and feel inadequate to convey facts. They may doubt they have anything to contribute. Our job is to help them discover *the thing that they can do*.

Consider what it's like for a new person coming to a committee that spends hours discussing a submission. If a small number of competent people do all the talking, they may come away feeling: *'If that's what the campaign is, I could never do that'* or *'those people are so smart I'll leave it to them'*. So ponder what your group is like for new people. Could there be barriers that we're not aware of? Could some of our group's habits make it hard for new people to get involved? Could we be stifling new initiatives because we're worried they might not express things the 'right way'?

To create pathways for new people we need to be smart about groups and meetings

A working group is focused on just one aspect of the campaign (e.g. stalls and merchandise; events; Mining Free Communities). Working groups may appeal to newcomers because they are smaller and more focused than a larger Action Group. In smaller groups, a new person is more likely to experiment with ways to contribute. A new person can try a couple of working groups until they find the one that suits. We need to be smart about meetings too. Meetings can help invite people in, or send them running with their tail between their legs. Read the tip sheet *Good Meetings*.

Avoid choke points

It's not uncommon for groups to develop 'choke points' – unconscious habits that stop us achieving *campaign speed*. Remember that a dynamic social movement is a bit messy! Are you willing to tolerate a bit of messiness if it means you build the community power to win?



| CHOKES POINT | | AGILE |
|---|---|---|
| One person manages it. Long delays. | GROUP'S FACEBOOK OR TWITTER | Managed by 3 people. More responsive, agile |
| Leaflet takes weeks in committee where 10 people have input | DECISIONS | Working groups are established for quick output |
| Group chokes because nothing can happen without the convener, who is too busy. | GROUP OUTPUT | Someone else convenes. Read tip sheet Good Meetings . Two or three people (not the convener) learn facilitation and start to unchoke the group. |
| A barrier is created by asking people to pay for membership before they can get updates. Every small decision in working groups has to be ratified by the alliance. Stops self-organisation. | CLUB THINKING or MOVEMENT BUILDING ? | Review our process: how easy is it for people to get on board and take initiative? Are there too many steps involved in decision-making? Does our way of doing things help us shift to <i>campaign speed</i> ? Or slow us down to <i>club speed</i> ? |

Adopt the *Heat* → *Phone* rule

Relationships are the life-blood of the movement. If you're upset with someone, talk to them. When people talk they respond to each other and can move on. But once terse words are in email or on Facebook, the words are fixed in virtual ink and it's hard to move on. Please adopt the *heat* → *phone* rule. Ask yourself: *'is there any heat in this?'* If the answer is yes, it's likely that you are annoyed. It might be best to use the phone or meet for coffee. Our relationships are our most valuable asset. Let's not break them by writing or texting when angry.