



## Quick tips for visiting your MP

Visiting your MP takes your advocacy to the next level! By meeting a politician you can communicate more than in a letter, but even more importantly, you can have a discussion and build a relationship. If you're active in a local social justice group, or church you can join with others as a delegation. A local group is more likely to secure a meeting, than a single concerned citizen.

### Getting an appointment

You should write to request a meeting by email or post. Say who you are, if you are representing a local group, and what you want to meet about. Conclude by saying you will be in touch to find a suitable time.

Follow up that day or the next with a phone call to the electorate office to advise that you have written requesting an appointment and would like to discuss when might be suitable for a meeting. It's likely they will not book the appointment straight away and will tell you they'll get back to you, but this will put your letter nearer the top of the pile.

### In the meeting

You are likely to only have 20-30 minutes. The first few minutes will be taken up with introductions and you thanking them for taking the time to meet with you.

You need to have a plan in advance that sets out:

- what issue you want to raise,
- what are your two or three main messages about this issue
- what do you want to ask them to do.

To ensure your main messages are influential, do some research about your MP. Do you share a faith? Are they a parent? Or a long term resident of a place with a multicultural community? These are just some of the traits that might enable a connection to be established and discussion to begin.

Do try and initiate discussion, rather than just doing all the talking.

For example, 'Like you, I am a Christian and am deeply concerned that the Government's policy of holding children in detention is contrary to the Gospel's message of valuing every human person'. What do you think the Government can do to value and protect these children?'

If the MP says things that are offensive or upsetting, it's best not to get angry or argumentative, but to politely hold your ground and offer an alternative view.

For example, 'I hear what you are saying about your objectives, but I can't accept that using one person to send a message to another is a credit to our country. We have to find a way that avoids this harm.' or 'I can see we won't agree on this point, but I want you to know that I think we can do better than this'.

## Wrapping up

You can ask them to do something for you even if you don't agree. Examples include asking them to raise your concerns with the relevant Minister, to raise a question in Parliament, to talk to fellow MPs or raise the issue in the Party room, or to table a petition in Parliament. Establish what they will do and when before you leave the meeting.

## Resources

Want more info?

Check out these guides to meeting your MP from [Oxfam Australia](#) and [Caritas Australia](#).

We've put together some [key policy points](#) to make things clearer for you and [here](#) you will find several documents that will give you Catholic views.