

## Access Matters

### A Guide to Post-election meeting with MPs

Meeting with your local MP is one of the most effective ways to help them understand why access matters, and to persuade them to take action for accessibility legislation.

The early days after an election are key to helping MPs understand what matters to people in their electorate, so the sooner you can organise a meeting with an MP about Access Matters, the better.

#### The purpose of meeting with your MP:

- Show them that access matters to you, as a member of their constituency
- Help them understand how access barriers impact on the daily lives and opportunities of people with disabilities
- Persuade them to support and take action on accessibility legislation.<sup>1</sup>
- If you met with the MP before the election, and they have been returned, to remind them of their previous interest and ask them to ensure the party take action in the new Parliament

We have developed a checklist below, to guide you through each step of the process

#### BEFORE THE MEETING

Action	Done
Figure out who is going to the meeting with you (we recommend going in groups of two or three with at least one person prepared to share their personal story about access issues)	
Call or email your MP's diary secretary / administration assistant at the electorate office, to find a time which is mutually convenient for everyone to meet (expect that the meeting will be between 2-5 weeks away). Remember that your MP will not be available to meet when Parliament is sitting	
Ask or advise the MP's secretary (possibly in the same conversation) about any access requirements.	
Save the secretary's details as a contact in your phone or note down their number because you may need to get in touch later.	
Email Áine so we can keep track of which MPs have been covered <a href="mailto:ainekc@gmail.com">ainekc@gmail.com</a>	

<sup>1</sup>A useful structure for persuasion messaging is Vision – Barrier – Solution.

- Lead with a shared value or vision eg we want all New Zealanders to be able to participate fully in society and contribute to their community
- Be clear about the problem eg But New Zealanders who have disabilities face barriers in day to day life that gets in the way of them being able to participate / contribute, and share your examples of accessibility issues
- Offer a solution ie accessibility legislation that outlines standards would mean that every business, service and organisation would know what they need to do to include people with disabilities

Read up a little on your MP's party and their values.	
With your MP's party's values in mind, sit down with your MP meeting buddies to come up with a plan for the meeting, including assigning roles for your team - one to lead the meeting (generally the person who arranged the meeting), someone to take notes at the meeting.	
Download and print the Access Matters Briefing Paper to leave with your MP, with your name and contact details added	
Check out transport arrangements to/from the meeting and arrange for everyone to arrive 15 minutes early	
The day before, mentally rehearse what you will say and refresh your memory about the <a href="#">legislation</a> and <a href="#">key messages</a>	
Bring any notes you may need to prompt you.	

## AT THE MEETING

1. You are likely to have no more than 30 mins with the MP. Plan for a 20 minute meeting and have a contingency plan for if the meeting is shortened (eg because the MP is running late). At the beginning of the meeting, it is useful to confirm with the MP how long you will have together
2. Start the meeting by clearly state the purpose of the meeting , for example: "We're here today because we understand first-hand how important it is that New Zealand is truly accessible and we would like to tell you about new legislation we are supporting that would help to make that happen. We'll be asking you to raise the issue of accessibility legislation within your party, and seek a commitment to consulting on, and introducing, this legislation in this term of Parliament". Putting this upfront helps you control the agenda, and means the main ask is made early in case the meeting is cut short
3. Tell a personal story to make the issue real and tangible, and tell them about the solution (ie accessibility legislation).
4. Invite them to share any experience they may have about access issues, and leave time for them to ask questions
5. You don't need to be the policy expert - your power is as a constituent who has very close understanding of access barriers and the impact on your life
6. If they ask for information that you don't have, it is perfectly fine to say that you will get the information and come back to them (in fact it gives you another reason to stay in touch)
7. Be clear on your ask of the MP so that you can tell them specifically what you want them to do (see table at appendix 1)
8. Check with them about timeframes for their action and agree on when you will be back in touch
9. Leave them with some information and your contact details (the Access Matters briefing note has been designed for this purpose)
10. Ask the MP for a photo with your delegation, that you can use in social media, and they can use for their own purposes
11. If the meeting has been positive, ask the MP if they would be open to a local media story about the meeting

## AFTER THE MEETING

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Action	Done
Debrief with your team. What worked well? What lessons could you pass on to your fellow campaigners? Assign follow-up actions - who will email the MP to say thanks and confirm actions? Who will take care of social media? Who will complete the MP engagement feedback form?	
Email the MP soon after the meeting to summarise the key discussion and agreed action points	
Tell the world about your meeting and the response from the MP, by posting the photo on facebook (on the <a href="#">Access Alliance facebook page</a> ) or twitter ( <a href="#">#AccessMattersNZ</a> )	
Contact your local media outlet to let them know about the meeting, using the local media release template and providing them with a photo	
Complete the <a href="#">MP engagement feedback</a> form so the campaign knows about the meeting and what happened	

## CURRENT STANCE OF PARTIES ON ACCESSIBILITY LEGISLATION<sup>2</sup>

By the time of the election, we had managed to secure public commitments about accessibility from Labour, Greens, and Maori parties.

Your ask of the MP will vary depending on which political party he / she represents.

Party and current policy	Your Ask of MP
<p><b>National</b> Willing to work on standards and regulations. No public announcement or policy.</p>	<p>Ask them to take it to the party room to seek a commitment to legislation.</p>
<p><b>Labour</b> The Labour Party's Disability Policy commits to "enforceable and mandatory standards for essential areas of life such as social housing and transport", states that "Labour will also bring New Zealand in line with countries such as the United States and Canada which have legislation to protect the rights of people with disabilities" and "Consider sponsoring the Accessibility for New Zealanders Act, draft legislation developed by the Access Alliance, with a view to passing it into New Zealand law."</p>	<p>Thank them for recognising the need to address accessibility, their support for enforceable standards. Ask for confirmation that they are committed to legislation</p>
<p><b>ACT</b> The ACT Party's Disability Policy states that "ACT is committed to working with businesses and the disability sector to make it easier for disabled New Zealanders to join the workforce and that "ACT will fully support accessibility provisions for all public buildings and public transport".</p>	<p>Ask MP to confirm commitment to legislation</p>
<p><b>New Zealand First</b> Has indicated "support for accessibility legislation and mandatory and enforceable accessibility standards". No public announcement or policy.</p>	<p>Ask them to take it to the party room to seek a commitment to legislation.</p>
<p><b>Greens</b> Public announcement soon after the launch of Access Matters, confirming commitment to introducing accessibility legislation.</p>	<p>Thank them for their commitment to legislation and seek advice and support on progressing in the new Parliament.</p>

<sup>2</sup>As at the election