

Meeting with your MP

Part 1: Securing a meeting

1. Put your request in writing

- A short letter or email outlining who you are, and why you want to speak with your MP is enough.
- Make sure you include who will attend the meeting and give them an outline of what you want to discuss (example below). This should not be a summary of your arguments, just a few sentences or dot points so they know what to expect. Getting your point across quickly and persuasively is key!
- Make sure you provide your contact details so the MP's office can get back to you.

Example email:

Dear John Smith MP,

I am writing to request a meeting to discuss the issue of koala habitat destruction here in NSW.

Koalas are at risk of extinction in NSW by 2050, and as one of your constituents in the electorate of Animalville I would like to speak with you on the issues of:

- Reducing land clearing to protect koala habitat
- Creating wildlife corridors to allow koalas to move between their remaining habitat
- Supporting the creation of the Great Koala National Park

Please let me know when suits you to meet with three other community members from the Animal Justice Party Animalville Regional Group and I.

Kind Regards,

Ms Jones.

12 Cat St, Animalville 2345
0412 345 678

2. Make your request stand out

- Make sure you highlight that you live in the MP's electorate, and if let them know if you hold an official position within the AJP (including Koala Expert or Regional Group Leader).
- To show you are interested in meeting with your MP, make sure to back up your written request with a telephone call one day later. Confirm that the office has received your request and mention you are looking forward to hearing back from them.

3. Be patient but persistent

- If you have not received a response to your request within 10 business days, telephone again and ask to speak with the MP's personal assistant or diary manager.
- If a meeting is denied don't give up! Remember to be polite, friendly and respectful and you will eventually secure a meeting time.

- Track your communications the MP's office, so if you have to email and call several times you can refer to the previous dates that you have communicated with their office. Saying you've tried to contact them multiple times may just get their attention.

Part 2: Preparing for the meeting

4. Get to know your MP

- Start by doing some background research on your MP, make sure you know how to pronounce their name and how to address them.
- Make sure you know which party (if any) your MP belongs to, if they hold any position in the party or in NSW Parliament, and how long they have been a member.
- Try to find out what your MP's views are on your issue and what the policy of their party is. If you're feeling especially inquisitive, you can do an online search on [Hansard](#) by searching your MP's name and the issue you are meeting with them about.

5. Know what you're going to say

- Research your issue (in this case, protection of koala habitat). Remember no one expects you to be an expert but make sure you have an understanding of the problem and keep up to date with recent media.
- Be confident about what you do know, and remember you can offer to get back to them on anything you don't. Answering "I don't know" is always better than making points you can't back up.
- Make sure to work out before the meeting what action you want your MP to take - actions could include: speaking out against destructive land clearing in Parliament, or a written commitment to protect koala habitat and take action on climate change.

6. Team up

- If you know other people who care the issue (including people in your Regional Group), organise a small team to attend the meeting. This will give you some moral support and back-up.
- It can also be effective to bring someone with personal experience of the issue – for example, when campaigning on koala habitat, it would be useful for a person who lives close to where the habitat destruction is occurring and has seen its effects first hand. It is harder for someone to argue against an issue when there is first hand experience at the table.
- While it's good to take a small team, don't try to bring too many people. Three or four is ideal. Remember that if you are bringing additional people, you need to let the MP's office know before the meeting.

Part 3: Meeting your MP

7. Make a good first impression

- While appearance shouldn't matter, it does. Make sure you dress appropriately, look smart and well groomed, and arrive on time.

- Begin by introducing yourself and those who you have with you. Thank your MP for taking the time to meet with you. Being passionate is important, but it is equally important to balance this with politeness.
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8. Listen to what your MP has to say

- Your local MP might be completely new to koala habitat destruction, or they may have known about it for years. Make sure you tailor your message to your MP's level of knowledge.
 - Listen to understand what your MP really thinks about the issue, this will help you respond to any misconceptions or false information they might have.
 - Your local MP may disagree with what you're saying even after you've spoken on the issue and presented them with the facts. This can be very frustrating, but try to be respectful!
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9. Tell your MP what you want

- Make sure to tell your local MP exactly what you want them to do. Be clear and to the point.
 - Give your MP strong reasons to take the action you want, it helps to demonstrate why this is in their best interests. Making it clear that there is strong electoral support for protecting koala habitat is an important first step. The more support you can show, the more likely they'll think of it as a vote-shifting issue.
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10. Secure a commitment

- Once you've asked your MP for action, make sure you get a commitment. Ask them what they are going to do as a result for your visit and when they are going to do it. Make sure they inform you when they have taken action.
 - Be careful - sometimes your MP may try and refer your concern to another MP who has greater responsibility in the area (for example Environment and Energy Minister Matthew Kean). If this happens, politely remind them that as a member of their electorate you would like their involvement.
 - If your MP does not support your position, make sure they justify to you in writing their differing view. This is a valuable and fundamental part of the democratic process.
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11. Leave a strong impact

- When the meeting is over, make sure you thank your MP for meeting and discussing the issue with you, regardless of the meeting's success.
 - Make sure to ask for the business cards of any advisors who are present in the meeting, and make sure you pass their details on to the NSW office.
 - Finally, get a photo with the MP that you can share on social media, and once you get home email them a thank-you letter.
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12. Debrief and follow up

- Talk over how the meeting went with your regional group. Discuss what worked, what didn't, and what you could do better next time.
- Don't forget to let the NSW Office know how the meeting went - email them a quick summary and let them know if you received any commitments.
- Make sure your MP honours their commitments to you from your meeting. If you don't hear anything from them for a month, give their office a ring or write and ask them whether they have taken action. Remember, persistence is key.