

MP engagement training for activists (intermediate level) April 2016

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The Watergardens group met with Vic Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Natalie Hutchins in 2015 on CIE.



The SA Refugee network present Nick Zenophon with the Childhood memories book in 2015.

The Townsville group outside local MP's office in 2016.

Webinar protocols

Please mute yourself as background noise can be loud and distracting. People who are unable to mute themselves will be muted by facilitator.

If you have questions/comments etc click on the hand icon and we will come to you at regular intervals.

If your microphone doesn't work you can use the question box to ask questions - we will check those at intervals too

Please do participate using either of the above methods.



Aims of this training

We need to speak to decision-makers across parties and at all levels of government

Understand our engagement strategy includes everything, from our National Director speaking to cabinet ministers, to our local groups talking with their MPs

Focus on seeking, preparing and attending meetings with MPs

Intro to Amnesty's 2016 election strategy



Why do we build relationships?

If we started a five year campaign, CIE for example, in March 2011, then by March 2016:

- Australia changed governments and has had four prime ministers in this time.
- NSW changed government once and premiers three times
- Victoria changed government once and premiers three times
- Qld changed government twice
- SA changed premiers
- TAS changed government
- NT changed government, and had three different chief ministers
- ACT changed chief ministers

SO: We need to speak to *all parties*, not just governments



Engaging with your MP can be done a number of ways

- phoning their office
- following them on social media
- letter writing
- inviting your MPs to your events
- meetings



Seeking a meeting

- meetings require some preparation for them to be successful
- but offer the greatest *potential* to build a relationship
- including meeting with staff in your MP's office

How to get a meeting

- phone the office to get a contact name before you formally request a meeting
- a formal meeting request should be in writing, via a letter or email
- Emphasise:
 - what you want to discuss with your MP (can be more than one issue)
- who you represent (Amnesty member numbers in your electorate
- your CO can help you with that)



What to do in a meeting

- be well prepared on your topic/s so you can discuss this clearly and in an informed way - expect to speak for up to ten minutes on the campaign/s and our asks (but no more than 15mins. Allow time for questions - this takes time and is important).
- identify roles in your group, for example, have a note taker for the meeting, have communicators - who will discuss particular points, and have a person who will maintain ongoing contact after the meeting.
- provide hard copies of any briefing documents to the person you meet with, such as Amnesty reports.
- be polite, professional, relaxed



What to do in a meeting cont...

- Where possible present the issue as an opportunity - relate the topic to an area of interest within your electorate.
- Have questions prepared and aim to come away from the meeting with a better sense of what your MP thinks – this will help inform what your group's future communications and next steps
- Expect tricky questions and know that it is ok to say that you'll get back to them with more information if you don't have the answers.



What to avoid in your meeting

Being combative: disagreement or a debate is fine, but be careful not to get angry, even if you feel it's justified! Remember you're aiming to build an on-going relationship.

Be aware of any dress code. Some state parliaments, for example, don't allow people access while wearing t-shirts. Dress accordingly.

Avoid bringing too many people, generally no more than 4.

Don't expect or demand an answer there and then.

Following up after the meeting

- Questions and more questions: if your MP cannot answer something, ask for a contact name/number and follow up
- Ask for an office contact for further follow up: tell them you'd like to keep their office informed about future Amnesty campaigns and events.
- Now you have an office contact, use it!
- If you have an event coming up, feel free to invite your MP to it at the meeting, and say you'll follow up.



The 2016 election

- We are finalising Amnesty's election strategy and developing our policy document, *A human rights agenda for the next Australian government*.
- This will be a set of calls covering all of our campaigns.

Our overarching national goals will be to:

- elevate issues related to Indigenous youth justice (CIE) as a matter of national importance
- help re-frame the political debate around refugee issues
- ensure candidates *know* there is a strong constituency for human rights issues

We're won't tell you what issues you can or cannot raise.

Community is Everything is AIA's 2016 priority, but if your group has a long-running issue, don't hesitate to focus on that.



The 2016 election - lead up and during the campaign

- elections are basically 150 local campaigns: focus on your local community
- ensure you are on your MPs' and candidates mailing lists
 - Call party offices if you can't find out online
- attend election events: candidate forums, town halls meetings etc, and feel free to ask questions, pin candidates down on Amnesty's campaign issues
- write letters to the editor of your local newspaper about issues which are relevant, or responding to announcements
- it's fine to seek meetings with MPs and candidates, but be aware that they are extraordinarily busy during a campaign

The 2016 election - the aftermath

Write to your newly elected/re-elected, MP. No matter which party they represent. Introduce your group, and provide a copy of Amnesty's calls.

Seek a meeting with your new/re-elected MP and/or invite them to an event.

Follow them on social media. Tag them in photos of your activities.

Elections come and go, but our campaigns go on.



Want to know more about our election strategy?

Come along to one of our two election strategy sessions:

20 April 7.30pm and 1 June 7.30pm
More info on [the Activism Calendar](#).

Some branches run training days in conjunction with their BAGMs - they will include the election strategy in these sessions (QLD/NNSW, NSW & SA/NT)



Any questions?

- You can find this and other resources here on the [Activist Portal](#).
- Tell us how your meeting went [here](#). We aim to build a map of MP engagement experiences around the country.
- Over the next day or two you will receive an online evaluation survey. Please do complete it. Your feedback is important.
- If you are on the phone and we can't 'see' you on our panel please email Tracey.Foley@amnesty.org.au so we can send you the evaluation survey too.
- Thanks for your time, we hope this was informative!

