

How to Visit Your Member of Parliament

Visiting your Member of Parliament (MP) is easy, can even be fun, and is certainly one of the most effective ways to show your concern and encourage your MP to act on an issue.

MPs are almost always friendly people, who enjoy and take notice of visits from their constituents. One of the most important elements of your meeting is simply having the chance to express that there are people in your MP's electorate who are interested and passionate about the issue you have come to talk about, and that they want to see action.

If you can, go with one or two other people to share the conversation and to show that it is not just you who is concerned about this issue. Many more than three or four people, however, may lead to the meeting becoming a bit unwieldy and you may not fit into your MP's office! Make sure to let your MP know though if you're there representing more people, particularly if you're representing a broader church, school or community group.

This guide is designed to be used in conjunction with our policy briefing sheets, which can be found in the [Catalyst Resources](#) section of our website.

1. Setting up a Meeting

- Ring the local electoral office of your MP – a list of MPs and their contact details is available at http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Members - ask to speak to whoever looks after the MP's appointments.
- Ask if you can arrange to meet with the MP for around half an hour and briefly describe what the issue is about
- They may not have free time for several weeks, so book early. If you have to wait more than a couple of weeks, it would be a good idea to also write to the MP to express your concerns and what you would like to talk about in your upcoming meeting – this way they get to see your concern quickly.
- Let the staff member know how many people will be attending the meeting, and if you are affiliated with a particular group (e.g. your church)

2. Preparing for your Meeting

- Before the meeting, work out what you would like to say to your MP about the issue, whether you will give her or him any material, and what specific asks you may have
- Meet as a group to discuss who will do what during the meeting
- It can be useful to learn a bit about the MP's background and priorities by looking at their maiden and recent speeches in Parliament, but this is not necessary – the most important thing is that you are able to explain your interest and concerns about the issue.
- You also need to remember to organise any documents or other materials you may need in the meeting (e.g. your briefing sheets, or a poster for your MP to hold up in a photo)
- Make sure you put aside some time before your meeting to pray together

3. During your Meeting

- It is a good idea to show your respect by dressing neatly, being punctual and being friendly with the MP and their staff.
- Introduce yourselves, and then explain the issue and why you are moved to meet and discuss it. At this point it would be a good idea to hand over the briefing sheet. You don't have to go into huge detail – the MP will ask for more details if she or he needs them
- Don't worry if you don't know the answer to a question, just say you will find out and get back to them on this.
- Be polite and persuasive, not rude and confrontational. You want the MP to become an ally for your cause, and they are unlikely to do this if you are angry towards the, or try to lecture them.
- But this doesn't mean you should not assert your case robustly - the best way to influence your MP is to have a genuine conversation with them; that way, they and you, will both hopefully learn from each other and, over time, build a constructive relationship and a way forward on this issue
- While you still have adequate time left, and based on the conversation so far, determine what actions you think are reasonable to ask of your MP. Consult the relevant policy briefing sheets for suggested asks.
- Thank your MP for the meeting and any actions that they have said they'll take

4. After the Meeting

- Thank your MP for the meeting and any actions they have said they will take
- After the meeting, debrief with your group and try to document any ways that you could improve future meetings
- Make sure you write down the outcomes of the meeting
- Send a letter thanking your MP for the meeting and anything they have agreed to do
- Make sure you follow-up on any commitments you have made or questions you promised to get back with an answer on
- If the MP does not meet their side of the commitments, make sure you politely follow up with them.
- We'd love to hear about how your meeting went! Let us know at advocacy@baptistworldaid.org.au

Help and Training

If you would like assistance with any of the above, or would like some training on how to visit your MP please feel free to contact Baptist World Aid and talk to Advocacy Manager, Gershon Nimbalker, or Advocacy Coordinator, Eliza Johnson.

Send them an email at advocacy@baptistworldaid.org.au