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Leading in sustainability

Approaching your MP or candidate: a how-to guide

MPs and political candidates get approached by many people every day. The good news is that most of them want to talk with you – particularly if you are a constituent at election time!

Our key strategy is to show that there is community support for lifting home energy standards. Making sure politicians hear from people in the local community is important for us to get the decision across the line.

The following are some basic pointers for how to effectively approach your local MP or candidate.

Look up who your local representative and candidates are

It's important to make sure you are approaching the right representative. To find out which Federal electorate you live in, you can search at <https://electorate.aec.gov.au/>

A full list of Federal MPs is available at the following link (including a postcode search if needed):

https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Members

Contact details for MPs are available at the above link. Most (all?) MPs also have their own websites which also include constituent contact details.

To find out the details of any opposition candidates in your area, the easiest option is to google the party and electorate.

Choose a way to contact them

There are a number of ways to contact an MP or candidate:

- Email. This is the most common method. Feel free to write your own, or use the example email provided by Renew.
- Phone call. You can call the office. It's highly likely that you will speak with a member of staff only.
- Events and stalls are great opportunities. Sometimes candidates will publicise upcoming stalls or 'open office' hours, which are perfect opportunities to approach them. Remember, they want to talk with you.
- Public meetings. During election campaigns, candidates may appear at town hall meetings or candidate forums organised by local community groups. Attending and asking a question from the audience is a great way to get an issue noticed.

Meetings

MPs get lots of emails and meeting requests – sometimes hundreds a day. This means that often requests are politely declined or referred to staff.

By far the most effective way to get a meeting with an MP or candidate is to ask for a meeting with a small group of local constituents. If you can say in your email or phone call that you would like to come in as a group of 5 or 6 local residents to meet with the MP as you are all concerned about an issue, it is much harder for a political office to turn you down than if you are just an individual.

Come prepared...

You will feel more comfortable and confident if you're prepared. Things you should do before meeting include:

- Read the background information provided by Renew
- Know a little bit about the candidate – you don't have to know everything they've said or done, but it's worth looking up the basics. What do they present as their priorities? Have they said anything about housing, energy bills, climate? A quick google is all you need to do on this.
- Make sure you are on time for meetings. Show up early and grab a coffee next door.

... but you don't have to be an expert

The important thing isn't knowing everything – in fact, sometimes it is best to leave your 'expert' hat at the door.

The most effective thing you can do is explain honestly and sincerely why the issue matters to you. Our strategy is to show that there is community support for better homes – so *the act itself* of approaching your MP is 90% of the impact. The medium is the message!

Be clear and succinct

In one or two sentences, give them a sense of who you are, and prioritise making it clear that you are a concerned local constituent. For example, "Hi, I'm Rob, I live in your electorate in Thornbury. I'm concerned about climate change."

You likely only will have a short conversation, so think of how you can succinctly explain the issue of home energy performance and say why the issue is important to you.

Make clear asks

It's important to make an ask of the politician. They are expecting it, and if you don't then it's likely they won't commit to anything or be clear about where they stand.

The key ask you should make is: "Do you support lifting standards for new homes to 7 Stars?"

At the end of any meeting, ask: "Is there any way we can follow up?" or "Would you please keep us updated on this issue?"

Don't pick a fight

Even if the politician's views differ greatly from your own, aggressive or partisan arguments will not be effective. Be courteous and polite at all times.

If appropriate, take a photo

Feel free to ask if you can take a photo with them to share with your group.

Give feedback to Renew afterwards

Renew is keen to know how MPs and candidates respond to our approaches. It is valuable to track our impact, and very valuable to gain intel on support or opposition to our goals as we plan further advocacy. Please fill out our [feedback form](#) following your contact with MPs/candidates.

Example email to federal members and candidates

Note: this is just a guide! Feel free to change it around or use your own voice – the more personal the better.

Dear [member's name],

I am a local constituent in your electorate.

I'm writing to ask you to support lifting energy standards for new homes to 7 Stars when the National Construction Code is updated this year.

I care about this issue because *[say why, honestly!]*

Energy efficiency is a win-win-win: it cuts energy bills, makes homes more comfortable, cuts emissions, and reduces pressure on the grid.

In July or August building ministers will decide whether to lift minimum NatHERS ratings from 6 to 7 Stars and require efficient appliances and solar. There is good independent research showing that this decision will leave households with more money in their pockets and also cut emissions by 15 million tonnes to 2030.

Some states have already said they support lifting standards, but I haven't heard anything from the Federal government.

Do you support lifting minimum NatHERS ratings for new homes to 7 Stars?

[I am part of a group of local residents who cares about this issue. We would like to meet with you over coming weeks to tell you why this matters to us as local constituents. Please let us know if you can suggest a time for us to come to your office.]

I would appreciate your response to this email.

Kind regards,

[Name, street address and contact details]