

## TIPS FOR MEETING WITH A PARLIAMENTARIAN

*Visiting an MP or Senator is probably the most effective way of communicating your concerns about hunger and poverty to him or her. Establishing a personal, respectful relationship with your MP carries more weight than signing a petition, sending a postcard or even writing a letter. Most MPs will welcome you and show you respect. They will appreciate that you, as their constituent, are asking them to take action on your behalf.*

### STEP 1: MAKING THE APPOINTMENT

- Ask for an appointment well in advance (The MP may not be free for at least 2-3 weeks)
- Give a brief outline of the reason for requesting the meeting.  
(“We would like to meet with the MP on the issue of Australia’s aid program”)
- Confirm who will be attending and which organisations (if any) you represent.  
(If possible have one person in your group who has visited an MP before. A delegation of 3 is ideal, but 5 or more can make the MP feel ambushed!)
- Confirm how long the meeting will be for (30 minutes is normal).
- You may be asked to send through your request by email to the advisor or appointment secretary before the meeting can be confirmed.  
(This can be brief - 4 lines or so - and should include your contact number.)

### STEP 2: BEFORE THE VISIT

- **Know about your MP.**  
Read some biographical details on the MP at [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au)
- **Know the issue**
- **Be clear about the purpose of the meeting and the specific outcome you want.**  
(Better to have a specific action in mind, rather than aiming to only to raise awareness)
- **Be clear about what you might want the politician to do.**  
This may include:
  1. Talk to the Minister or Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs
  2. Express support for your requests with parliamentary colleagues and/or in party meetings.
  3. Ask a question in parliament, with or without notice, to obtain information about, or draw attention to the issue.
  4. Speak in Parliament on the issue.
  5. Speak at a public meeting, or a meeting of your group.
  6. Make a public statement in support of the issue.
  7. Put updates on the issues in their electorate newsletter.

Don't be afraid to ask what else the politician might be able to do for you!

### STEP 3: PREPARING YOUR TEAM

- **Prepare a written agenda.**  
A written agenda (one page) can be prepared and emailed to the MP’s office the day before the meeting.  
Include: Details of meeting attendees

Points to cover, including some supporting statistics

Request being made

This is the outline for your meeting and should be agreed to by all members of your delegation.

- **Allocate roles to each attendee**

Decide beforehand who will make introductions, lead the discussion, take notes, be timekeeper etc.

- **Materials to take to the meeting/ leave with the MP**

What materials do you require? Reports, media generated etc, video

What information do you want to leave with the MP?

- **Practice beforehand**

Have a rehearsal beforehand to practice speaking the points you want to make and how to deal with an MP who may be side-tracking the meeting.

- **Dress appropriately**

Being clean and smart will create a professional image.

- **Arrival**

Arrange to meet nearby at least 15 minutes beforehand to talk about any last minute issues.

Arrive at the MP's office 5 minutes before the meeting.

**DO NOT BE LATE!**

## STEP 4: DURING THE MEETING

- **Introductions**

The meeting leader should introduce the team, explain the purpose of the meeting and provide a copy of the agenda.

At this point it would also be appropriate to acknowledge a recent and relevant action of the Parliamentarian, government or party.

- **Work through the agenda**

Be flexible where appropriate (there is no point going into a lengthy outline of something the Parliamentarian is already very familiar with.)

- **Don't "lecture" your Parliamentarian.**

Engage them in a discussion of the issues. Ask him/her what they think about the issues you are raising. You might be impressed by what they tell you about their concern or prior action.

- **Don't get side-tracked**

If discussion moves outside the agenda, acknowledge the points with interest, but may be more relevant for a future meeting.

- **Don't know the answer to a question from the MP?**

Then say so, but that you will find out and provide the information later.

- **Leave enough time to make your requests**

This is probably the main point of the meeting. Do not ask make your requests of the MP in the last 10 seconds of your meeting.

- **Conclude the meeting**

The meeting leader should wrap up discussion and confirm what the MP and the delegation committed to do.

- **Thank the Parliamentarian for their time and support**

## STEP 5: AFTER THE MEETING

- **Debrief**

Discuss afterwards what worked and didn't work and tips for next time.

Allocate responsibility for any follow up action.

- **Follow up action: YOU**

Send a thank you letter confirming meeting outcomes and commitments.

Provide any information you promised to send but if you cannot keep to your commitment, contact the MP to make an alternate arrangement.

- **Follow up action: the MP**

If the MP made a commitment, follow up with their office on this if you haven't had a response within a reasonable time.

**Congratulations on visiting your MP!**