

Meeting with your local MP

Researching your local member

AEC

The AEC have a searchable database where you can find your federal electorate and information about your local member - <http://apps.aec.gov.au/esearch/>

Open Australia

Open Australia is a database where you can search for your local member, what they stand for and how they have voted

<http://www.openaustralia.org.au/?gclid=CLi805uiqc4CFUFwvAodEYwI4Q>

Write to your local member

Write to your member and request a meeting in writing. Your letter doesn't need to be long, simply outline who you are, that you feel strongly about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights. State that you wish to discuss policy areas that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with them and who will attend the meeting. This should not be a summary of all of your arguments, just one or two sentences or dot points so they have some idea what to expect.

Your electorate

Make it clear that you live in their electorate and that for you this is an important issue.

Provide all your contact details and ask the MPs office get back to you.

It is often a good idea to follow up your written request with a telephone call. Confirm that the office has received your request and indicate that you are looking forward to hearing back from them.

Be persistent

If you have not received a response to your request within seven days, telephone the office again and ask to speak with the Member's personal assistant or diary manager. Don't give up, be politely persistent.

Getting ready

Know your MP

It's useful to do some background research on your MP before you meet with them. Make sure you know their name, which party they belong to and if they are a sitting MP, review their website and social media and get a sense of what is important to them, particularly in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights. Check to see if they have spoken about the issue.

Know your issue

Read through the ANTaR Platform Paper, Issue Fact Sheets and the Redfern Statement. It might also be useful to keep an eye out in the media for any current editorials on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues.

Write up a brief document with key points you want to raise with your Member. You can use this as a guide for the meeting and leave it with your Member as a brief.

If you are asked a question you don't know the answer to offer to get back to them. Feel free to email campaigns@antar.org.au if you need any further information. The most important reason for meeting with your Member is to highlight that you care about this issue and that you believe it is an important issue for all Australians.

Know what you want

The ANTaR Platform contains specific asks in relation to Indigenous Affairs Policy. Be clear about communicating these asks to your Member and ask them to champion these issues with the party.

Making the most out of the meeting

Team up

If you know other people who care the issue, organise a small team of 3 or 4 people to attend the meeting. Politics is a numbers game and if you can show that there is wider community support for these issues you are more likely to gain traction.

Organise with your team so that communication and tasks are shared, these will include introductions, discussion lead and note taker.

Be organised

Giving your Member a brief document outlining the context, issue including statistics and key asks. Ensure your contact details are included on the brief.

Be impressive

Dress appropriately, arrive on time and be assertive when you meet your Member - introduce yourself and your team and thank your Member for taking the time to meet with you. Balance passion with politeness.

Listen

Your Member might be completely new to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues or they may have been working on Indigenous Affairs for years. Hopefully your earlier research will give you a sense of this before the meeting, however listen carefully to how your Member responds to what you are saying so you can tailor your message to their level of knowledge.

Be clear about the asks

Let your Member know what you want them to do. Be brief and to the point.

The ANTaR Platform gives compelling reasons and clear actions that your Member can take back to the party and internally advocate for.

Explain that the disadvantage faced by First Peoples affects and is the responsibility of all Australians, led by government. Demonstrate that there is electoral support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights and that taking action is in their best interests. The more support you can show, the more likely they'll think of the issue as a vote-changing issue.

Secure a commitment

Once you've spelt out what you are asking for, seek a commitment from your Member. Ask them what they are going to do as a result of your meeting and when and ask that they inform you when they have taken action. If your Member does not support your position ask them why so that they justify their differing view.

Leave a lasting impact

Thank your Member for their time meeting with you. If you haven't already, hand over the briefing papers and point out the asks that are in the brief. Ask for the best contact details so that you can remain in contact with them. Indicate that you appreciate their time and would be happy to be contacted should they have any questions and/or to meet with them again at any stage in the future.

After your meeting

Debrief

If you met with a team, discuss with the group what worked, what didn't, and how you could do it better next time. If you were on your own consider jotting down a quick SWOT, making a note of any points to keep in mind for next visit. Review your notes of the meeting and follow up on any actions you committed to. If your Member gave you a commitment and time frame make a note of that so you can follow up with them to confirm that it happened.

Follow up

Send a follow up email to your Member, thanking them for meeting with you, clarify the actions they committed to undertake and any timeframes discussed. If you committed to getting further information to them include that in this email and indicate that you look forward to hearing from them.

Report back to ANTaR

Complete the Member Meeting form and send it back to campaigns@antar.org.au