

# Community Toolkit Guide

## Advocacy and Campaigning

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# Introduction to advocacy

## What is advocacy?

Advocacy can be defined as any action that speaks in favour of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports, defends, or pleads on behalf of others and/or an important cause. For many community organisations and support services, advocacy is something that they will need to engage in at some point in their operations, if not continually.

## Advocacy campaigns

An advocacy campaign is an organised movement that refers to a set of activities designed to get support for a cause or idea, with the intent to, as a result, make positive change at a local, state, federal and/or structural level.

## Developing an advocacy campaign

Taking the time to develop an advocacy campaign will likely lead to more successful outcomes in the long run. It's important to keep in mind that an advocacy campaign can be a long-term thing, and as such a community organisation should keep in mind that they can't necessarily expect to see tangible results from their efforts straight away.

There is a wide range of ways to advocate and therefore there is no one-size-fits-all approach to advocacy campaigns. Your community organisation must carefully consider both the nature of your group (e.g. size, types of members, location, vision, etc.) and the nature of the cause you're advocating for. Some of the most common techniques are outlined below, but it's important to still do your own research about this topic and not just rely on the content within this guide.

## Letter writing

The easiest and simplest action your organisation can take is writing to politicians and candidates and asking your supporters to do the same. Submitting your request in writing to a politician puts pressure on them to act, particularly when many similar letters are received.

You can choose to make it an open letter using an introduction such as *"To politicians and candidates standing in the upcoming federal/state/local election"*, or personalise it based on the individual politician or candidate. Details about these can be found here:

- Local- [Councillors - City of Wanneroo \(www.wanneroo.wa.gov.au\)](http://www.wanneroo.wa.gov.au)
- State- [The Western Australian Government Ministry \(www.wa.gov.au\)](http://www.wa.gov.au)
- Federal- [Senators and Members – Parliament of Australia \(www.aph.gov.au\)](http://www.aph.gov.au)

Keep in mind there are certain protocols for writing to Members of Parliament, which can be found here- [How to address Senators and Members – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](http://aph.gov.au).

To help with this process, you can refer to the draft letter template below- be sure to customise it and make it relevant to your organisation, the person or group submitting the letter and the person reading it. When requesting people outside of your organisation to submit an advocacy letter it is worth asking them to let you know so that you can monitor who has (and hasn't) been contacted.

And don't forget to ask them to also spread the word and ask their own contacts to also submit a letter.

## Template – letter from individual person to politicians and political candidates

Dear [name of politician/candidate],

I am writing to you to pledge your support for [cause].

[Concise, specific explanation of what is being asked for].

[Insert reference to a comparison between what other people in a similar situation have and what your target audience has]. I hope that you can make a similar contribution towards the [cause].

It is essential that [cause] is addressed as a matter of priority for the following reasons:

- [insert reasons- be specific and emotive- consider what will motivate them to act]

[Insert short real-life story that demonstrates why the cause is so important].

I wholeheartedly support the [organisation's] call for [cause]. This will [summarise impact].

If you would like to see what I am asking for, further information relating to the [cause] can be found at [organisation's advocacy webpage].

Yours faithfully,

[Name]

## Meetings

Face-to-face meetings can often be the best way to share ideas and information on key issues and ensure your request is considered. You can arrange a meeting either in person, over the phone or even online by contacting the office of the people who are seeking to be elected or re-elected.

## Group and network communication

Many resident associations, sports clubs, church groups, businesses and schools send out newsletters or use other messaging technology to share communications with their networks. This is a good opportunity to include information relating to your organisation's cause and ask people to consider supporting your organisation in addressing this.

## Media

Consider issuing a media release about the cause and identify opportunities for meaningful photographs to be taken to accompany this (this will help to make the release more enticing to journalists). Here are some relevant contacts you might like to consider issuing your release to:

- Yancheap News Online: [anita.mcinnis@yancheapnews.com.au](mailto:anita.mcinnis@yancheapnews.com.au)
- PerthNow: [news@perthnow.com.au](mailto:news@perthnow.com.au)
- The West: [cos@wanews.com.au](mailto:cos@wanews.com.au)
- WA Today: [news@watoday.com.au](mailto:news@watoday.com.au)
- 6PR: [news@6pr.com.au](mailto:news@6pr.com.au)

- ABC: [abcradioperth@abc.net.au](mailto:abcradioperth@abc.net.au)
- Channel 7 news: [cos@seven.com.au](mailto:cos@seven.com.au)
- Channel 10 news: [eyewitnessperth@ten.com.au](mailto:eyewitnessperth@ten.com.au)
- Channel 9 news: [contact@9news.com.au](mailto:contact@9news.com.au)

## Petitions

Petitions legitimately and quantitatively demonstrate public support and could be used to ask the federal government to provide increased funding or other kinds of support towards your cause. Anyone can start a petition, whether they are a member of your organisation, representative of another group, or an individual, and it can be either paper-based or online.

Parliament provides specific rules and guidelines on starting a petition and we recommend these are followed to ensure the best chance of success. This government webpage will provide you with more information regarding these requirements- [Infosheet 11 - Petitions – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](https://www.aph.gov.au/infoshheet-11-petitions).

Before getting started, some of the key questions to consider include:

- Who will set up the petition and be the formal petitioner? This person must meet certain requirements.
- Be clear on what you are asking for and make the request clear and concise at the top of the petition.
- Make sure those signing the petition are clear on what details are required for the petition to be sent to Parliament.
- Identify whether you will be petitioning the Senate or the House of Representatives.
- Decide if you want a paper-based petition or an e-petition Information about setting up petitions, the rules and guidelines, and frequently asked questions are all available on the Parliament House website.

## Social media

Social media is a great tool to use to reach others with both words and visuals. Additionally, posts can quickly spread like wildfire if the messaging is right.

There is a range of different ways in which you can share your advocacy message on social media. You could:

- Make a post on the social media channels of your organisation.
- Ask members to share the post on their own channels.
- Ask people who see the post to re-post it on their own social media platforms.
- Share it with any relevant community pages, or closed groups that you are part of.

The social media channels of your organisation should regularly share information about the cause. You could also consider forming a social media group specifically relating to your advocacy efforts and use this to keep your supporters engaged and up-to-date, as well as providing them with resources and ideas about how they can further support your cause.

To help with this process, you can refer to the draft social media post template below- be sure to customise it and make it relevant to your organisation, the person or group submitting making the post and the audience who are likely to view it.

## Template – social media post

As a proud member of [organisation/group/community], I'm passionate about [cause]. This is because [very brief reference to why this is important]. Without [concise, specific reference to what is being asked for], [impact] will continue. If you're like [me/us] and would like to see this cause addressed, we need to ACT NOW. Please take 5 minutes to register your support and help the cause – [website link].

## Printed materials

Another key element of an advocacy campaign is the use of posters, flyers, and other similar resources. Once displayed (ensure you have the permission to do so) these provide a constant reminder about your cause to whoever sees them and helps to spread general awareness.

Some potentially suitable sites for you to provide these materials are (ensure you have permission to do so first):

- Schools
- Workplaces
- Sports clubs
- Community noticeboards
- Shopping Centres
- Cafes
- Online noticeboards.

Your organisation could also consider carrying out a letterbox drop in their local neighbourhoods, or better yet ask your supporters to all do this within their own neighbourhoods.

Make sure any printed materials you use are:

- Visually engaging
- Have minimal written content
- Tell people how they can support your cause
- Let people know where they can go for more information.

To help develop your printed materials on a budget you could consider using free marketing and graphic design platforms such as [www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com).

It's also worthwhile considering what sort of professional documentation your organisation has that can demonstrate the value and impact of what you do. When meeting with politicians it can be beneficial to be able to leave them with an engaging document that they can read and refer to after your meeting. This could include:

- Annual report
- Strategic plans
- Stories/statements of impact
- Position statements
- Reports relating to the cause.

## Engaging influential people

Having a well known or influential person as the “public face” or figurehead of your advocacy campaign can be beneficial. This doesn’t necessarily need to be a politician. For instance, it could be a:

- Principal of a school
- Coach of a sports club
- Well-known business figure
- Recipient of a well-known public award
- Chef
- Athlete
- Musician
- Television or movie celebrity.

## Public gatherings

Research what public gatherings are coming up near you and see if it’s possible to establish a presence for your organisation at the occasion. This might be gatherings such as public events, markets, sports games, a mass, etc.

If you can establish a presence at a public gathering, then your organisation can develop an engaging stall and/or have supporters walking throughout the crowd handing out and speaking to people about the cause. Ensure that whatever you do at such a gathering is engaging, uplifting, meaningful and inspires action.

## Further information

There is a wide range of information, tools, templates, and resources available online that can further help with developing and running your advocacy campaign. We recommend viewing a real-life example of a successful advocacy campaign by viewing the City of Wanneroo’s Campaigning Toolkit for the Alkimos Aquatic and Recreation Centre. It can be found here: [Campaigning Toolkit - Recreation Centre \(wanneroo.wa.gov.au\)](https://www.wanneroo.wa.gov.au/campaigning-toolkit-recreation-centre)

Another valuable resources is the article by the Civil Society Academy about strategies to help your advocacy campaign. It can be viewed here: [13 Strategies for your Advocacy Campaign \(civilsocietyacademy.org\)](https://www.civilsocietyacademy.org/13-strategies-for-your-advocacy-campaign)

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