

Engaging your Member of Parliament

Meeting with NSW Members of Parliament

These tips are designed to help Mental Health Coordinating Council Members engage with their local Member of Parliament. We've provided details of your MP in the email sent with this information sheet. Alternatively find your MP through - [Find my Electorate](#).

The value of face-to-face

One of the most effective ways to reach politicians is to meet them in their constituencies. Meeting face-to-face with politicians who care about improving the lives of people living in their electorate brings our shared issues into their consciousness and can influence their decision making around mental health investments. The relationships you help build could galvanise important champions and allies within the NSW Parliament for community-based mental health.

Connecting with your MP

MPs generally welcome opportunities to meet local groups in their electorate office or out in the community. This gives you the opportunity to strengthen your organisation's relationship with your MP, raise the profile of community-based mental health and establish an ongoing relationship with your MP.

Setting up a meeting

Call, write to or email your local MP. The templated [introduction letter](#) will help with composing this. MPs are often busy and can take time to respond. If you think you need to remind them, send again or call your MP's office and speak to one of their staff. Be prepared to explain where you are from, why you want to meet and who else will be attending.

Before the meeting

Once you've secured a meeting date, get to know your MP. Do your research about who they are, which political party they belong to, how long they have held the seat. Google to see what causes or issues they support. Prepare what you want to share and have your key messages in mind. We have prepared [Facts and Figures](#) to help you.

Meeting with your MP

Approach the meeting as developing an ongoing relationship. You're more likely to influence your MP if you can connect on a human level. It is probable you'll only get a short amount of time. Get to the point quickly. Keep it simple. Make use of simple but strong facts to illustrate what you are saying, see the MHCC [Facts and Figures](#) for these.

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Starting the conversation

Start by introducing yourself and thanking your MP for taking the time to meet with you. Your MP might be completely new to the community-based mental health sector, so ensure you can explain the basic background and avoid using jargon or acronyms. Demonstrating the specific needs in the local electorate will help engage their interest.

Local issues are crucial

It is always best to talk about the local services and particular issues in the MP's electorate. If appropriate, consider inviting someone from the area to the meeting with personal experience who may be able to share their story. Personal stories, particularly localised ones, are powerful. Consider how many people the service supports in the area, the number employed, investments made in the area and any other benefits the organisation has in the electorate. It's often useful to bring along some information about the local service to leave with your MP. Make it concise and no longer than a double-sided page. Your information should help your MP understand your organisation, the sector, any local issues and steps that can be taken to tackle the problems see the [MHCC Mental Health Investment Priorities](#) for more on what can be done.

After the meeting

Send a follow up letter or email to the MP. Thank them for meeting with you, outline your understanding of any actions discussed and indicate that you look forward to keeping up the relationship. Include any information you promised to send to them. It is a good idea to note who the MP's staff member was that you dealt with for future contact.

Inviting your MP to an event

MPs generally welcome opportunities to meet groups and visit organisations out in the community. An event is an opportunity to strengthen your relationship, raise the profile of your event and possibly get photos and media coverage.

If you have trouble securing a meeting

MPs are often busy and can take some time to respond, but staying in contact and following up will show the MP how important you feel it is to meet. If you have not received a response within ten days call the MP's office and ask to speak to their personal assistant or diary manager. Let them know you have written requesting an appointment and would like to discuss when might be suitable for a meeting.

Build an ongoing relationship with your MP

It's important to see your meeting as the start of an ongoing relationship. Sign up to your MP's newsletters. Follow them on social media. Invite them to events at your organisation, or to a follow up meeting at your workplace or request an opportunity for them to meet more of your workforce.