



How to Meet Your MP to

Defend WA's Nature

*Empowering you to advocate
for strong nature laws*



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Contextualising

Why are MP meetings important?

Members of Parliament (MPs) care about what their constituents think and feel, and we have power as constituents to hold them to account! Nearly 70% of parliamentarians said that face-to-face meetings with constituents are the primary method they use for finding out what their constituents think, rating it much higher than any other method.¹

Every email, call, or meeting request from one constituent represents many more people in an electorate who feel the same way, and MPs know this. It's also important to remember that **this is their job** - meeting with and listening to constituents is a part of the role of being an MP!

If you've never met with your MP before, this is a golden opportunity to introduce yourself, building a connection that can be utilised in this and future local and national campaigns.

What even is an MP office?

Face-to-face meetings with MPs will almost always happen at their Electorate Office - but what even is an electorate office? Each state and federal MP will have an office in Parliament, used primarily during Parliamentary sitting weeks (unless your MP is a Minister) and one or two electorate offices within their electorate. A federal MP's office will usually have 3-5 staff members, based in one (or sometimes two) offices within their electorate. A state MP will often have 1-2 staff members in their electorate office.

The purpose of these electorate offices is to:

- *Provide constituent services* - office staff connect with individuals and organisations, to advocate to the State or Federal Government on issues including public benefits, grant applications and visas
- *Communicate with constituents* - staff take calls from constituents, respond to and track messages from constituents, follow up on policy issues raised by constituents and keep track of the issues constituents care about most
- *Meet with constituents* - provides a place for MPs and their staff to meet with constituents in person
- *Host and attend events* - MPs host and attend community events to connect with their constituents, listen to people in the community, and garner press

¹ Brenton, Scott & Australia. Department of Parliamentary Services. Parliamentary Library. 2010, What lies beneath : the work of senators and members in the Australian Parliament / Scott Brenton. Parliament of Australia, Dept. of Parliamentary Services Canberra

Who is your MP?

You may already know who your MP is; you may already have met them! If not, you can find out your:

- Electorate name
- MP name
- MP party

For state MPs:

- Check out the [Parliament of WA website](#)

For federal MPs:

- Using the [Parliament of Australia website](#)

In order to get a meeting with your MP, you'll also need a bit more info on them, including their:

- Office location
- Office phone number
- Email address

You can find all this information on your MP's webpage using the links above.

Requesting a Meeting

The best way to request a meeting is via email - then, if you haven't heard back from them within a few days, to follow-up with a phone call or by visiting their office to speak with their staff in person.

We've created an email template for requesting a meeting for you, which you can find [here!](#)

When requesting a date for a meeting, it's important to remember that MPs are very busy, and you might not get a meeting for 1-2 weeks.

Depending on whether parliament is sitting, your state MP might offer to meet you in their electorate office or their parliamentary office in Perth.

For federal MPs, it's more important to consider [Parliamentary Sitting Dates](#), as your MP will be in Parliament in Canberra during those times so won't be able to meet with you in their electorate office!

Trouble-shooting

What if my MP doesn't respond?

If you don't receive a response from your MP within a few days, you can follow-up with a phone call to check that your email was received and ask again if your MP would be available to meet. If this isn't successful, try a follow-up email explaining your previous attempts to contact them and set up a meeting time, proposing some alternative meeting times if the original time doesn't suit. If this still doesn't work - talk to your organiser and we can help troubleshoot.

What if my MP can't meet with me on the proposed date?

You can always propose a new time or ask for a time that would suit them!

What if my MP is unwilling or unable to meet?

You may not be able to get a meeting with your MP themselves if they are especially busy. In that case, you can request to meet with your MP's staff - ask if you could meet with the Research/Policy Officer responsible for dealing with issues related to nature, impact assessments, environmental laws, climate. If that still doesn't work - talk to your organiser and we can help troubleshoot.

What if I can't meet with my MP or their staff?

Your MP may not be willing or able to meet with you in person, and there may be no one else suitable to meet in their stead. In that case, there are still ways you can engage with your MP! You can:

1. Send a follow-up email with your asks, explaining your concerns and the public support that exists for the government taking action to protect WA's nature through strong nature laws.
2. Stay in touch! We are running an ongoing nature campaign with plenty of events, actions and workshops to get involved with.

If this is the case, we will support you to do this in the most effective way - just reach out to us!

Preparing for the Meeting

Skill-up on what we're calling for

We'll be giving you briefers with the top-liners about the need to defend WA's nature, and how to talk to your MP about this issue.

Read up on your MP!

It can be helpful to know some extra information about your MP before heading into your meeting with them. Some questions to think about when researching your MP are:

- Which party do they belong to? What faction within that party? Are they a minister or shadow minister? Do they sit on any parliamentary committees?
- What are their views on deforestation and land clearing? On biodiversity loss? What other issues and causes do they support?
- Have they spoken in parliament about these issues?
- What are their interests outside parliament? What footy team do they follow?

There are a plethora of resources available to find out information about your local MP:

General:

- Your MP's website will have lots of biographical information, as well as all their speeches. Check out their maiden speech for information on what got them into politics, what political issues they care most about and what communities they care about representing.
- Social media - follow your MP on social media! This can give you an idea of the kinds of community activities and issues they are being vocal on, maybe even their favourite sports team or interests outside of parliament as well. These are great things to know to help forge a genuine connection!

Federal:

- [TheyVoteForYou](#) is a website where you can view how your MP has historically voted on different issues - whether they voted for or against the party line, issues they have consistently voted for or against and issues that they haven't been vocal on.
- [Open Australia](#) is a website that records what all Australian MPs have said and done in parliament. Search up your MP to see what they've been saying.

Assemble a team

If possible, it's great to have 2-3 people attend a meeting with an MP (preferably all or the majority being constituents). There are many reasons it can be a good idea to go as a team, rather than as an individual:

1. **Roles** - when working as a team you can share roles amongst you during the meeting to keep it running smoothly. For example, having a notetaker, a timekeeper, someone to take a photo, as well as sharing the load when running through different parts of your agenda with your MP.
2. **Strength in numbers** - attending a meeting as a group is a stronger display of power and community interest in the issues you're raising. Every person meeting with an MP represents many more within the community who feel the same way.
3. **Solidarity** - it can be intimidating going to these meetings on your own, but it can also be fun and empowering, so it's good to have allies in the room with you and people to debrief with afterwards.
4. **Accountability** - it's easier to hold our MPs to account on any commitments they make to us during the meeting if we have multiple people to witness them.

Ideally, it's great to be able to bring a diverse group of people along to the meeting to show the diversity of people engaged in and committed to action on this issue. For this meeting, 2-3 people is ideal.

Have a think about people in your community who might be interested in this campaign and in coming along to a meeting. A friend, a family member, a co-worker perhaps! If you can't find anyone to go with - fear not! A Wilderness Society or CCWA staff member or representative from another organisation will accompany you.

Meeting agenda

It's important to go into your meeting with a good idea of what you'll be talking about! We've put together an agenda for you to guide you through this meeting which you can find [here](#).

During the Meeting

What to expect

Your MP will often be accompanied by one of their staff members during the meeting. If you are meeting with staff members rather than your MP, treat it as if you are meeting with your MP - these people are just as important and influential!

Your meeting will likely have a 15-30 minute time slot, however, they may be late, have to cut the meeting short, or have to cancel unexpectedly so be prepared to be flexible. This may be entirely out of their control - they are very busy people.

Before you start the meeting it's a good idea to confirm the amount of time your MP has available for the meeting.

Tips for a great meeting!

- **Always be polite** - make sure you're on time, allowing time to sign in at reception (you don't want to be in a rush!). Use the correct title for your MP (Minister, Mr/Mrs/Ms/Mx) unless they ask you to use their first name. Be professional and courteous - this is super important to making an impression and building relationships.
- **Start off on the right foot** - your MP may start off the meeting with some friendly banter to put you at ease. Start off on the right foot by thanking them for meeting with you, introducing yourself and thank them for something positive they've done - maybe for the environment, the local community, your electorate - before diving into your agenda.
- **Take notes** - make sure you have a designated notetaker to write down your MP's responses to questions and comments. These are important when following up on any commitments your MP makes. Also write down any questions your MP had that you didn't know the answer to so you can follow up with them and give them an answer.
- **Be succinct** - be clear to your MP about the issue, be passionate but don't let yourself waste time getting caught up in the details.
- **Keep it simple** - don't assume that your MP has any knowledge of the issue. MPs need to have a broad understanding of a range of issues, so they're not likely to be an expert. Speak simply, don't use lingo, acronyms or abbreviations. Be flexible and ready to talk at a higher level if you can see that your MP already has a good understanding of the issue.
- **Speak in your own words** - your MP is meeting with YOU - a real life person! They want to know what you think and feel, not just a litany of facts and figures. Your MP won't remember everything you said, but they will remember how you made them feel - so make sure you use this time to build a connection and drive home the key points.
- **Don't try and fudge it** - don't pretend to have knowledge that you don't have! No one is

expecting you to be an expert, so if you don't know the answer to a question. Respond if you can but never try to make things up; you can always use the old "I'll get back to you on that" and give them an answer in your follow up.

- **Stay on track** - you may find your MP starts to veer off-topic or tries to change the subject. If this happens, bring them back to the point, respectfully, but firmly. One way to do this is to say something like, "We know your time is valuable, we really only came here to discuss this issue. We're happy to discuss the bigger picture if you have more time."
- **Build a relationship** - one of the aims of meetings such as these is to build a relationship with your MP. You may disagree on policy, but you're far more likely to influence them if you connect with them on a human level. Listen to them, learn about their values, and find points of commonality.
- **Don't be intimidated** - your MP is a regular person just like you! You have a right to speak to them as a constituent and as your MP, they have a duty to listen to what you're saying.
- **Leave a good impression** - leave a good impression by once again thanking them for their time and for meeting with you. Let them know you'll be following up and that you'd be happy to meet again in the future. You can also ask for the business cards of any other staff in the meeting.
- **Give them the briefer** ([Federal MPs & WA State MPs - EPA & Climate](#)) - as your meeting is wrapping up, give your MP the briefer we'll have sent you which outlines the key asks. This is a good summary for them and shows preparedness and professionalism.

Dealing with objections

It's important to remain calm and not get defensive when dealing with objections from your MP. A useful formula for dealing with objections is:

1. **Listen** - try and understanding their objection and ask clarifying questions if necessary
2. **Empathise** - empathise with and try to relate to what they are saying. It may be a very common and understandable concern or objection!
3. **Answer them** - provide your answer to their objection
4. **Comprehension** - check that they've understood what you've said

Roles

Before you go into your meeting, make sure you have a discussion with your partner/s to decide who's going to do what. Make sure you decide who will be:

- The notetaker
- The timekeeper - someone to keep an eye on the time and keep the meeting on track
- Photographer - Snap a photo with your phone
- Talking through each agenda point - make sure you know who is going to say what! You want to avoid speaking over one-another or contradicting each other.

Taking a photo!

Make sure to snap a photo of you and your team meeting with your MP as you finish up the meeting. There will usually be a staff member you can ask to take the photo for you. Make sure you ask your MP's permission first.

If your MP doesn't want to get a picture with you, get a photo without them outside, next to their office sign.

Please send the photo to your organiser lead at CCWA or the Wilderness Society!

Debrief & Follow-up

Debriefing with your group

Your debrief with your meeting group is a safe space to chat through your thoughts and feelings after the meeting. Grab a cuppa and have a yarn! It doesn't need to be too formal. Discuss your thoughts on:

- What went well?
- What could have been better?
- What would you do differently next time?
- How do you think your MP responded to/received the information you presented to them?
- Were you able to get any good comments or commitments from your MP?

Make sure you have notes on everything you discussed!

Debriefing with CCWA and Wilderness Society organisers

After your meeting with your MP, one of the CCWA or Wilderness Society organisers will give you a call to debrief on how your MP meeting went. Some things we will discuss will be:

- How did your MP receive the information presented to them?
- How do you think the meeting went? How are your team feeling?
- Did you get any comments or commitments from your MP?

After the debrief, we'll ask you to send through your photo and a copy of the notes so we can track progress on how meetings are going across the state, and promote this important climate advocacy work!

Following up with your MP

Once you've had your meeting with your MP, it's a good idea to follow-up with them via email the next day. Here's what to include:

- Thank them again for meeting with you
- Tell them something that you appreciated from them during your meeting
- Restate your main points from the meeting
- Reiterate and confirm any actions or commitments that were agreed upon
- Provide answers to questions you said you would follow up on

Meeting Request Email Template

[Note: Please personalise this letter and make it ‘your own’ to increase your chances of being noticed and getting a response].

If you are sending an email, add a [Subject Line ie. Constituent Meeting Request]

If you are mailing a letter, add [Date] and [MP’s Name and Office Address]

Dear **[Mr/Ms/MP/Minister] [last name]**,

Thank you for your continued hard work in WA Parliament, and in making **[your area]** a wonderful community to live in. I am writing to you as a local resident in **[your state electorate/federal electorate]** as I am deeply concerned about the state of nature and the places I love. **Ecosystems in Western Australia, including the South West forests, are collapsing, and wildlife are at risk of extinction.**

I am worried about **[insert your personal concerns and connections to nature here.]****[Additionally,]** I am very concerned about our state and federal nature laws being weakened under pressure from powerful corporate interests, and what that means for the protection of WA’s nature now and for future generations.

I’m **[describe yourself and your roles (e.g. professional associations) or your position in the community generally]**. I am also involved in a state-wide community campaign to defend WA’s nature with strong state and federal nature laws.

[Together with another local constituent,] I would like to meet with you to understand your perspective on this topic, and to ensure that as our representative, you are aware of the views of your constituents on this matter.

If the timing is suitable for you, I would like to request a meeting in the week of **[insert dates here]**.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards,

[Name] [Suburb] [Email] [Phone number]

Meeting with MP Agenda Guide

Start with an introduction.

- Confirm how much time you have with your MP
- Introduce yourselves
- Thank them for the meeting
- BONUS: thank them for something they've done in the community, electorate, for the environment etc. that you appreciate
- Agenda overview - briefly explain what it is you'll be talking about

First, explain who you are and your connection to the electorate (*ie I grew up in this area, I moved here X years ago, my kids went to the local school, etc.*).

Second, tell your story (*why I'm here, why I care about nature*).

Third, the asks. Outline your key asks of the government and some specific follow up requests for your MP.

I'm here to talk to you about my concerns for WA's nature, which is under threat from climate change, land clearing, deforestation, industrialisation and pollution. WA is home to global biodiversity hotspot but is also a hotspot for extinctions. So I/we have a few main things I'm asking you to push for in your government.

STATE MP MEETINGS

WA Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)

Ask 1: **Strengthen the WA EPA and environmental laws**

Byline: WA must strengthen environmental protection laws, including: ensuring no significant impacts to threatened species, limiting the use of offsets, imposing objectively verifiable conditions to improve compliance and monitoring, and properly assessing cumulative impacts. The EPA exists to protect the environment. The EPA's objectives must be safeguarded and enhanced, and the integrity of the environmental assessment process and the EPA must be upheld.

Ask 2: **Guarantee the full independence of the EPA**

Byline: To be effective, the EPA must be able to give independent and uncontaminated advice. The EPA Board must consist of environmental experts, not industry insiders, to avoid conflicts of interest. Recruitment should include a set of eligibility criteria that ensure members have an interest in, and experience of, matters affecting the protection of the environment. Moves to prioritise 'projects

of state significance’ and issue a ‘statement of intent’ will dramatically undermine the independence, purpose and integrity of the EPA. These proposed changes would send a strong signal to, and apply considerable pressure on, the EPA to prioritise, fast-track and approve projects and forgo proper environmental assessment. It is critical that these proposed changes are scrapped.

Ask 3: Ensure community consultation and collaboration

Byline: Proposed changes to the EPA were brought about by lobbying from powerful vested interests in Western Australia, These proposed changes have so far lacked consultation with First Nations, community or environment groups. All communities in Australia have rights that should be recognised to ensure they get a meaningful and fair say in environmental decision-making, including the right to know and the right to participate. The public right to appeal EPA assessments is an essential check and balance and it must be maintained.

Ask 4: Commit to thorough environmental assessment

Byline: The EPA must enhance its ability to conduct thorough environmental assessments by increasing staffing, improving training, enhancing data availability and conducting proactive, strategic assessments that provide for regional planning, upfront protections and recommendations of appropriate zones for development . Proposed time limits and fast-tracking would weaken decision making by limiting the information that the EPA can request, and risk reducing the integrity and rigour of complex assessments. To reduce delays and the drain on EPA resources, the onus needs to be placed on industry to provide well designed, peer reviewed, transparent and considered proposals that are not damaging to the environment. Further, the EPA must maintain its obligation to consider greenhouse gas emissions and not defer this responsibility to the inadequate Commonwealth Safeguard Mechanism; the WA State of the Environment reporting should be reinstated to provide credible, timely and accessible information to decision-makers and the community.

CLIMATE BILL

Ask 1: Legislate science-based and 1.5-degree compatible emissions reduction targets, including an ambitious 2030 target

Byline: WA is the only state in Australia without a 2030 emissions reduction target. While the bill has a provision for an interim target to be set at 2035, the most important milestone should be the 2030 target that is consistent with the framework for reducing emissions under the Paris Agreement. We are in the critical decade for climate action, with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stating that “without immediate and deep emissions reductions across all sectors, limiting global warming to 1.5°C is beyond reach.” Not including a 2030 target is a major shortfall, and by neglecting to do so, WA will be placing national climate action measures in serious jeopardy. Targets must be fully enforceable to ensure accountability.

Ask 2: **Establish an independent, science-based climate advisory body**

Byline: An expert, independent climate change authority with a role in planning, oversight and advice, would strengthen the accountability of the government in reaching 1.5°C aligned targets. WA must accurately represent the Paris Agreement, as crossing the 1.5°C threshold risks unleashing irreversible climate tipping points.

The advisory body will provide the public with greater confidence in the government by enabling transparency, developing evidence-based pathways for sectoral emissions reductions, and establishing greater certainty for business. An independent authority can also play a role in setting appropriate carbon offset limits, and advise on adaptation pathways and strategies.

Ask 3: **Refer to a Parliamentary Committee**

Byline: Given the significance of the bill to WA, MPs must support a referral of the bill to a parliamentary committee, and ask for a parliamentary enquiry be held, as well as conduct a consultation process calling for public submissions, and evidence to be presented at a hearing.

Can you commit to raising these matters with the Environment Minister? In Cabinet (if they are a Minister themselves)? In your caucus? Can you please let me know the answers you get? Do you have any suggestions on how we can assist you to achieve these changes?

Wrapping up.

- Thank them again for the meeting
- Ask for a photo with them
- Let them know you'll be in touch to follow-up on discussion points via email

FEDERAL MP MEETINGS

Ask 1: **Genuinely protect and restore nature through the EPBC Act**

Byline: The EPBC Act must end native forest logging; end habitat destruction of threatened and endangered species; ensure no new coal and gas approvals; enshrine nature protection from climate impacts in National Standards; consider climate impacts and ensure scope 3 emissions are disclosed; commit to regional planning that protects ecologically sensitive areas and creates zones for future development

Ask 2: **Ensure the community has a legal voice in standing up for nature**

Byline: *An independent federal EPA has an independent board; adequate funding for assessment, monitoring, and enforcement; a requirement to explain how it has taken community feedback into account*

Ask 3: **Truly value and respect the rights, knowledge, and cultures of First Nations Peoples**

Byline: *First Nations communities must have a say in the decisions that affect them; communities must have the right to challenge decisions; the Federal EPA must be required to explain how it has taken First Nations communities' feedback into account*

Can you commit to raising these three matters with the Minister? In Cabinet (if they are a Minister themselves)? In your caucus? Can you please let me know the answers you get? Do you have any suggestions on how we can assist you to achieve these changes?

Wrapping up.

- Thank them again for the meeting
- Ask for a photo with them
- Let them know you'll be in touch to follow-up on discussion points via email

Some extra script tips and detail for your meeting:

Your story: You might want to explain why you personally care about nature and climate change.

The below are all just examples to use if helpful.

You could say something like:

- *I'm scared about my kids' and my grandkids' future if we don't deal with biodiversity loss and climate change*
- *I love Ningaloo Reef/South West forests and I'm worried what will happen to them if we don't have strong laws to protect them*

Here in WA we've already seen WA is getting hotter and drier, we're getting less rainfall in the South West but more floods and extreme weather in the North. We are at risk of losing plant and animal species to extinction over the next couple of decades. I'm worried about the impacts of biodiversity loss and climate change on the people and places I love. That's why I really want you to take the most ambitious action to protect nature as possible.

You might also want to congratulate your MP on the positive things the Labor government has done on environment including:

- *Committing to legislate net zero emissions by 2050*
- *The ban on native forest logging in WA*
- *The expansion of national parks in WA*
- *Committing to setting up an independent federal EPA*

... and then bring up the "asks" and hand the MP the briefer

→ [Federal MP EPBC briefer](#)

→ [WA State MP EPA briefer](#)

→ [WA State MP Climate Bill briefer](#)

