Handout 12: Working with Politicians

The role of your Member of Parliament (Commonwealth, State/Territory or Local Council) is to advocate for the communities needs. Sometimes, the member will put a great deal of energy into your cause if they themselves have strong views about the issue, or it has the potential to affect a great number of their constituents, or if it enables them to criticise another political party. Other times they will contact the minister or department and provide letters of inquiry and seek to resolve the matter. They can be asked to speak at public meetings, and if the issue is one that they feel strongly about or the opportunity is provided within the election cycle, ie. close to an election, they may take the opportunity to do more than speak on the issue. Another important factor to consider is the media is more likely to take an interest in the campaign if the local Member of Parliament attending an event associated with it.

Delegations: Another form of lobbying is through delegations. A delegation is a group of people who represent a particular organisation and issue/s. For delegations to be effective advocacy tools, it is important to:

1. Select your delegates ensuring they are representative of the issue/target group. Ensure at least one person in the groups is articulate and able to present a comprehensive overview of the issue requiring discussion/action.

2. Summarise the main points in writing – to be included on the agenda for the meeting and enable the focus to be maintained.

3. Meet Prior to the meeting with delegates to maximise their information and prepare them for the meeting.

4. Take Notes during the meetings: appoint a note-taker for the purposes of having a record and reporting back to the main group.

5. Ask questions: The meeting will provide delegates for an opportunity to discuss the issue/s and ask questions that clarify or progress the discussion.

6. Seek feedback or follow-up meeting.

Remember to be prepared for the meeting. Gather relevant documents, seek clarification of other stakeholders views. Documents can also be accessed through requests to the government department and Freedom of Information.