

Agenda for Meeting with MP

An initial word of thanks to you

Thank you for agreeing to set up a meeting with your local member. We are truly grateful that you have given time and commitment to what we know is an issue of critical concern, not only to people who have fled to this country for protection, but also for the very character of who we are as a nation.

Background information for the meeting

Present your views in light of the briefing material, making sure that you focus on the area for discussion. Be very aware that the meeting could be short, so try to get to the point fairly quickly. Listen also to the MP. Rather than debate the details, simply outline your asks. If the MP wants to debate the issues, affirm simply that you're not there to debate, but just to name and explain your asks, and offer an accompanying document – with an offer to meet again to discuss the issues further and in detail if the politician would like to do that.

We are coming to realise that there is growing support for action for refugees among people of faith. Refugees who have exited detention and are now in the community are becoming more visible in the Australian community and have been involved in sharing their stories.

- Don't go into the meeting adversarially.
- Be aware of the background of the member, noting especially if there is a refugee history in the MP's background.
- Know the electorate as well, the background of voters, and how strong community support is for refugees. This can sometimes persuade politicians to change their minds (e.g., the situation of the Biloela family and the growing support of the broader Australian communities who do not want this brutality to continue).
- Not all of the 1967 Protocol of the Refugee Convention has been incorporated into Australian law.

1. Introductions – who we are and our commitment to the injustice suffered by people seeking asylum

- Thank the MP for taking the time to meet with you. Clarify at the start of the meeting how much time the MP has available for the group. Each participant briefly introduces her/himself. Mention the particular organisation or community you represent and say why you are committed to this issue.
- It helps to thank politicians for any good they may have done, while recognising how much more work needs to occur.

2. One or two stories – related to our demands

- If you can be accompanied by a refugee, this would be enormously valuable
- It would be helpful to provide the MP with one or two brief stories from people with lived experience.

3. Outlining the problem

Instead of giving the MP the solution first, set out the problem, listen to him/her about his/her solution to the problem first before offering our **asks**.

Points you can make

- We are aware that Catholic organisations, such as Vinnies, JRS and House of Welcome, have had to step in and provide financial and other supports for those

deprived of SRSS, and missed out on JobSeeker or jobKeeper. We know this is also true of many others – Uniting Church, RACs, RAR, Bridge for Asylum Seekers. This has placed enormous burdens on these and other charities.

- We have not had arrivals by sea in the past two years, but people seeking asylum here haven't stopped suffering anguish, illness, and in some cases dying – without the support of families. We have a deep concern for refugees who cannot sponsor family members to Australia, and who cannot gain permanent residency.
- We are aware that the present system is a huge economic drain on both the Government and on community groups.

4. **Our specific asks of the Government**

- To provide **income support** and a **financial safety net** for all people seeking asylum in Australia
- To **end temporary protection visas** and create a clear pathway to **permanent residency**
- To ensure access to **family reunion** for refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia

5. **How the MP can help (some options)**

- Raise our demands in the Party Room
- Ask a question in Question Time
- Speak to relevant ministers
- Make a statement in Parliament.

6. **Some additional points we can make**

- Offer an alternative about how we can save the government money – by not detaining people seeking protection and offering them the opportunity to work and put money back into the economy (and this is already happening with many refugees on SHEV and TPVs).
- Maybe make the point that thousands of Catholics will be voting in the election and are concerned about the treatment of people seeking protection
- If meeting with Labor candidates, point out that we are Catholics and Catholic Social Teaching intersects well with traditional Labor values and better treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum.

7. **Can we get a commitment from the MP?**

- Ask where the MP stands on this issue
- Ask if there is an action the MP is prepared to commit to
- Ask how we can support the MP

8. **Final Actions**

- Leave a post card and summary with MP
- Inform her/him we will be in touch and thank him/her for giving us time.

9. **After the Meeting**

- Send feedback to the organisers.
- Follow up with a thank you to the MP, any information you may have promised, and a reminder of the requests made.