



Baptist Union
of Victoria



ADVOCACY

**Churches Influencing Communities
Pursuing Justice**

*A resource for Pastors, Church
Leaders and Activist Groups*



ADVOCACY

Advocacy is the act of pleading on behalf of another. It is about influencing those who have the power to make changes. Those with decision-making power in our society might be politicians, company directors, community leaders or even friends and neighbours. No matter who our audience is, advocacy requires long-term effort, and is most effective when a large group acts in unity.

Being active for the welfare and rights of others is a biblical expression of Christian faith (Isaiah 61:1-2; Isaiah 58: 6).

As Christians, our advocacy focuses on seeking justice for poorest, the forgotten or the marginalised in our country and around the world. They may be people we never meet in the Pacific Islands or they may be attending our gatherings every week. They may be doing all they can to find refuge in Australia or they may be trapped and enslaved in our country.

Becoming aware of the issues facing others is a starting point, but it must lead to action if change is to be achieved. This requires concerted effort.

Advocacy can take many forms, including petitions, letter writing, demonstrations or protests, political forums, social media campaigns or face-to-face meetings with corporations or politicians.

This guide focuses on meeting with your local Member of Parliament. This creates a foundation of relationship that is necessary for any other advocacy activities to be effective. Advocacy in the political arena presents the potential for a very rich and rewarding relationship with your local MPs and Senators. This could have a profound impact not only on those for whom you advocate, but also for your local church.

This guide will help you step through the process of engaging in advocacy, and will assist you as you find out:

- Which advocacy opportunities your church could be involved in
- How to get the support you need through Baptist organisations and affiliations
- Who your MPs are, and which churches share your electorate
- How to prepare for a face to face meeting with a politician
- How to build on the issues and see change in policies, in your church and your community

Effective resources for advocacy are readily available to you through nine of the organizations outlined in this guide. They provide support, encouragement and many good news stories of advocacy that is working. They represent communities of people who are anticipating your involvement.

We hope you enjoy the journey of advocacy and we look forward to seeing it transform the way your church engages in ministry in its neighbourhood, particularly among the most marginalized. May the relationships you build with those in power be a great encouragement to you and be a vehicle of justice and mercy in the lives of countless people.

Inspiring your church, gathering your team

What issues should you focus on ?

Ask yourself:

- What issues are people in our community facing?
- What areas of practical service does our church community undertake?
- Are there groups within our church who are actively advocating on certain issues?
- What issues move me personally?

If there are no obvious answers to these questions, you may need to do some inquiry within your community. Below are some ideas on gathering relevant information:

- Seek input from your leadership team
- Conduct a survey of your congregation to understand the issues that they themselves, their neighbours or family are facing or are passionate about
- Conduct an audit of your community through research and meeting with other community leaders to see what they perceive to be issues in the area
- Meet with the other churches, groups and leaders in your electorate and pray together
- Use the checklist on p8 to map out what you know and what you want to do

What Resources can help you ?

Once you have a clear direction for your advocacy areas of interest, you can connect with one of the organizations listed in this resource (p9 -p14). These organizations can provide information for you and your church, simple advocacy steps that you could take during a church gathering time, or provide steps to awareness raising events, Bible study series, or sermon outlines. You may be able to organize a speaker from the organisation to inform your church on the issues.

How can you represent these issues to your MP ?

Most advocacy issues will require political involvement. Meeting with your local Member of Parliament is a privilege and a rewarding process. She or he is appointed to represent your interests in Parliament. As a Baptist leader, you represent a large constituency on the advocacy issues you will raise with your MP. Therefore, your views on particular issues should be of interest to your representative. Draw confidence from this, but it is always best to approach advocacy with humility and respect.

Advocacy is most effective when there is unity amongst a large community seeking the same outcome. Presenting this unity and broad support for an issue is important in your meeting with your MP. Below are three things to consider when gathering your team to meet with your MP:

- Broaden your representation by inviting other Baptist pastors or other Christian leaders to join you in your meeting (ensure you know in advance that you will all be giving the same messages – it is embarrassing to discover in front of your MP that members of the group disagree on key points!)
- Focus on the concerns of the electorate by ensuring that those in the meeting are active in the life of the church and where possible, live in the electorate.
- Appeal to your representative by providing a range of ages of people who are eligible to vote at the next election and are living in the electorate.

How to Meet with your MP or Senator

Making your time to meet

Your first step will be to lock in a time to meet with your politician. This may take some time to lock down. The steps below will help you to establish a time and place to meet, along with the information the politician's office will require.

- Check the Parliament Sitting dates at https://www.aph.gov.au/News_and_Events/Events_Calendar to learn when the representative will be in Parliament for sitting weeks, and therefore not in their electorate for a meeting
- Before you call, email or write to your politician, make sure you know how to address them:

MP, never held the position of Minister
"Dear Mr/Ms First Name Surname MP"

MP, Currently or previously held the position of Minister
"Dear The Hon First Name Surname MP"

Senator, never held the position of Minister
"Dear Senator First Name Surname"

Senator, currently or previously held the position of Minister
"Dear Senator The Hon First Name Surname"

- Contact the office of your federal or state politician by phone, requesting a meeting. Make sure you indicate who you are, who you are representing, and the intention of the meeting.
- Provide a list of the team who will attend the meeting, including names, ages and addresses (meeting with people who live in the electorate is a priority for most MPs).
- Email through the agenda of the meeting to the appropriate staff person or politician.
- You may like to suggest that your politician meets you at your church or in a place where they can incidentally meet more people from your community. This could be an attractive option for your politician, as they are often looking for maximum exposure. It is a win for you too, as they will get a greater understanding of the work of the church in your area. It may also help you to feel more comfortable in your presentation if you are in a familiar place.

A full list of Ministers, Members of Parliament, Senators and Electorates is provided at the Parliament of Australia website http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/ and the Victorian Parliament Website <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/members/>

Before the Meeting

In preparation for the meeting research your politician, and be aware of their position and history around the issues you plan to talk about. Make sure you take time to pray with your leadership team and your team who will attend the meeting. Involve as many people as you can in the preparation stages of the meeting by encouraging prayer and awareness in your congregation.

- Understand your politician as best you can:
 - Go to http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members and search for your MP or Senator. This will give a professional overview of the representative and links to any speeches or addresses they have given
 - Go to the politician's website. This will indicate their areas of interest, and any recent press releases, it will also have their maiden speech to Parliament which will reveal their key concerns and 'pet' issues
- Research the media platforms used by the politician (Facebook, Twitter, Website, Printed Publications, group emails). Decide from these, which ones you will use to share a photo and a summary of the meeting.
- Create a briefing sheet for the meeting. You will probably get no more than an hour in your meeting. Whilst you may have many things you would like to talk about with the politician, it is best that you present only a few compelling issues. Make sure your briefing sheet includes:
 - The background to the issue, including relevant statistics
 - A clear picture of what changes you believe could be made
 - How you believe it could be achieved
- Make sure the ASK you have of your politician is very clear on the briefing sheet.
- Along with the briefing sheet, you may want to include props, photos or graphs that help to illustrate what you are presenting. You could present a video from different individuals in the church, which you could show to the politician, and then upload on social media. Be creative. Also prepare some real stories about actual people, to give real life examples of the issues you are discussing.

Some tips for Pastors; Building relationships with Politicians

- Make sure your MP is invited to your Induction Service. When you meet them at the service, say that you would like to catch up soon to learn more about the community.
- Before you get absorbed in the activities of your new church, make it a priority to meet politicians and other community leaders. Meet them to learn from them. They are usually well-informed about your new mission field. Such meetings also show you are keen to play a part in helping to improve the neighbourhood. This provides a platform for future engagement.
- Attend community forums arranged by Councils. If you take an interest in the community, community leaders will often take an interest in you.
- When new local representatives are elected, write to congratulate them and see if you can arrange an appointment to meet with them to talk about the things your church does or is planning that will benefit the community.
- Include events in your church calendar that you can promote in the community and invite politicians to. This could include Inductions, Commissioning of facilities or topical services or other events. For example, hold a “Civic Service” and invite a number of politicians to attend. Or special events to commemorate particular historic national or local events like Centenary of Federation, Anniversary of Black Saturday.
- Consider inviting MPs to church events where they have a contribution to make eg, when preaching through Acts and passages about Paul’s relationship with the Roman authorities, invite a Federal MP (a Christian) to talk about being a Christian politician.
- Remember that politicians are people doing a demanding job. They have families. They deal with stress. Take an interest in what they do – not just what you want them to do for you. Be interested in the challenges they face. Offer to pray for them and their families. If it feels comfortable, you could pray for them in their office.
- Australians are often cynical about politics and critical of politicians. Most MPs are people of goodwill who are serving to make a positive contribution. Present yourself as someone who shares this outlook. Seek to work with them to improve things
- Be respectful (1Pet 2:17). If they visit your church service, make sure someone greets them and ushers them to a seat near the front. Acknowledge their presence. Include them in the service if they are open to this. MP’s are often happy to do a Bible reading and/or be interviewed. If you meet with them privately, keep confidences if they talk about personal things.

- Be prepared for meetings. If they see that you are informed and interested, they may invite you to comment on other issues that they are dealing with. They are busy people and take a dim view of people who speak from ignorance or who push untrue lines. In addition to reading background materials on the issue you are lobbying over, make sure you have facts, share a story or two that earths the issue and perhaps take a survey of your congregation to back up your view.
- Recognise that political power has its limits. Even senior politicians operate within limits imposed by budgets, party policies. Be prepared for a politician to say "I agree with what you are saying but for me, trying to do anything about this is like walking uphill into an avalanche."
- Be prepared to agree to disagree. Lots of people express anger to MPs. You do better if you present your position reasonably and respectfully.
- Avoid being party political. This frees you to relate well to MPs from various parties and to speak prophetically rather than in a partisan way.

Here's a video that captures some of the above. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oO1l_VNovwk

The Meeting

The meeting time is a time of relationship building. Remember to have a long-term view of this meeting, just as you would as you build a friendship. There will be opportunities to meet again in the future, so take time to understand your representative and don't use the time solely to present things of your own interest.

- Arrive 15 minutes early, and wear business clothes.
- Take time for each person to introduce themselves and their reason for being at the meeting.
- Present the politician and any staffers who are in the room with the briefing sheet.
- Have someone on your team taking notes of the meeting, with any actions agreed to or comments made by the politician.
- Treat this relationship with your politician like you would a new friendship:
 - Don't expect to say everything you want the first time you meet
 - Do expect to meet up again some time
 - Do keep in touch in other ways than just scheduled meetings (i.e. Facebook, email, saying hello at events that they might be at)
 - Do be positive and respectful
- Verbally summarise the outcomes from the meeting and follow up steps.
- Take a group photo or if appropriate ask permission to grab a group video of the politician or staffer to use on social media or in publications. (they are likely to want a photo with you too!)
- Agree upon a time frame for meeting again with the politician (if appropriate).

After The Meeting

It is very easy to believe that the work is done once you have had your meeting, however, the effectiveness of your meeting will be determined by what you do after it. This will determine how your church engages long term. It will also reveal to your politician how determined you are in seeing long-term change. Below are some things you can do after the meeting that will make sure you keep the advocacy ask on the agenda, and make the most of the time you have spent in preparation for the meeting.

- Immediately upload images and a summary of your meeting to social media with appropriate hash tags and tags to maximize reach.
- Follow up with a thank you email to the politician and include any actions that have been agreed upon.
- Agree on a time to meet up again as a team across the different churches.
- Distribute the minutes to the whole team and agree upon where the minutes will be kept for future reference.
- If you are using the resources from a particular organization that is listed here, please make sure you give feedback to the organisation on how the meeting went.
- Contact those who prayed for your meeting, with a summary of how things went, and how helpful the resources were.
- Keep on file the notes that were taken in the meeting.
- Show photos of the meeting to your congregation the next time you meet. Make sure you let them know the outcome of the meeting, and include any stories of unity amongst churches that were represented or responses from the politician that were encouraging.

You can also bring more influence and advocacy around the issues you have raised concern about through other communications channels. Your local media is always interested in what local groups are doing and local issues. Here are some things to consider:

- Be prepared to speak on issues that are on the local agenda, even if not on your agenda. This shows you are part of the local community, in-touch with people, etc. This often leads to being invited to speak on other matters, which may provide opportunities to promote your agenda. Being quoted also raises your church's profile.
- Articles are better and cheaper than advertisements.
- Try to think of an interesting angle – human interest; community dimensions – rather than just what interests you or your congregation.
- Avoid “insider” jargon.
- Whenever possible, be positive.
- Write to the Editor (by name) or a specific reporter.
- Offer photo opportunities.
- Write your article from the top, so they can cut off words as space requires.
- Include some quotes. This saves the journalist having to contact you for a quote and gives you control over what words you may be reported to have used.

Use this checklist for planning your Advocacy efforts:

Your Electorate and MP

1. What is your federal electorate?

2. What other Baptist (or other church) congregations are in the same electorate? Who are the leaders of these congregations?

3. Who is your MP and what pertinent things do you already know about them?

4. What is a realistic time frame for you and the other Baptist churches in your electorate to meet with your politician?

Compelling Policies

5. What issues do you see in your community that are in need of advocacy?

6. What issues globally are you compelled by, and could advocate for?

7. Which organisations do you believe are best positioned to help you with policy information you will need to present to your MP?

Leading Your Church

8. What do you need to do in preparation to connect with other churches in the electorate?

9. How could you educate your congregation on the issues of advocacy you may present to your MP?

10. Which representatives from your church could you gather for a meeting with your MP?

11. What communication channels could you use in your church and community to provide information and feedback regarding your meeting with your politician?

Baptist Organisations & Other Coalitions & Affiliations to Help and Resource You

A Just Cause

ajustcause.com.au



What they do

A Just Cause is a ministry of Australian Baptist Ministries. They provide tools that help churches get educated around justice issues, bring justice into their worship, mobilise into advocacy for justice, and connect with opportunities to serve those for whom they advocate.

What advocacy opportunities they offer

A Just Cause offers political engagement tools, church audit tools, and tools for practical change in the church environment to engage in the following issues:

Refugees and Asylum seeker rights and protection

- Gambling reform
- First nations – building healthy and respectful relations between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians
- Care for Creation
- Family Violence

Baptist World Aid

baptistworldaid.org.au



What they do

Baptist World Aid Australia is a Christian aid and development organisation working with 38 local Christian partner organisations implementing 73 projects in 18 countries.

Baptist World Aid helps Australians tackle the injustice of global poverty and act together in ending it. They partner with Christians and churches in Australia, particularly those from the Baptist movement, in faithful prayer, ethical consumption, generous giving, and courageous advocacy.

Baptist World Aid offers a national advocacy and discipleship network called Catalyst. Catalyst helps churches and individuals learn about injustice and take action alongside other Christians.

What advocacy opportunities they offer

Catalyst helps churches seek justice for:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- People seeking refuge
- Women experiencing domestic violence
- People unable to secure safe, affordable housing
- Older members of our society in need of support
- People vulnerable to the impacts of climate change
- People living in extreme poverty
- People subject to modern slavery, forced or child labour

Baptcare

What they do

Baptcare is a faith-based not-for-profit organisation that provides residential and community care for older people, support to children, families and people living with disability, financially disadvantaged people and people seeking asylum.

Baptcare responds to community need through advocacy on behalf of those who have a limited voice in Australian society. They recognise that it matters how governments, the community sector, churches and local communities understand poverty, disadvantage and adversity, as this impacts how we determine solutions.

Baptcare engage in policy and advocacy issues crucial to the needs of people they work with. They also conduct research and policy projects to increase understanding of the issues that affect children, families, disability, aged care and asylum seekers. They aim to improve practice delivery, inform debate and work in partnership with others at influencing social and economic policy in Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and across Australia.

Baptcare's goal is to deliver evidence-based advice and contribute to the development of state and national social policy on children, families, disability, aged care and asylum seekers.

What advocacy opportunities they offer

Advocacy stems from their involvement through established community projects and include amongst other things:

Affordable housing and disadvantage

- Asylum Seeker issues
- Violence in Family and Carer relationships
- Issues faced by the disabled
- Aged Care



What they do

Micah empowers Australian Christians to advocate on the most urgent global justice issues facing our world today – extreme poverty, rising conflict and climate change.

Through their key initiatives and campaigns, Micah supports Australian Christians and church leaders to engage our federal politicians warmly and relationally, leading to significant outcomes on key issues of global justice.

What advocacy opportunities they offer

Micah takes action to:

- End extreme poverty
- Stop conflict
- Protect communities from climate change
- Leave no one behind

Campaign for Australian Aid

australianaid.org

What they do

Campaign for Australian Aid is a movement of people, organizations, communities and businesses who believe that our country can and should do more to help build a better, fairer future for all. Campaign for Australian Aid is backed by Baptist World Aid and Micah among many other leading community and development organisations.

What advocacy opportunities they offer

Campaign for Australian Aid provides up-to-date and readily accessible media and shareable online resources to educate your church and wider community on Millennium Development Goal success and education on Australian Aid and its effectiveness.

The Campaign for Australian Aid website also provides extensive information on how to write to politicians regarding Australian Aid and how to meet with local federal representatives.

Be Slavery Free

www.beslaveryfree.com



BE SLAVERY FREE

What they do

Be Slavery Free is seeking to solve the global problem of modern slavery by preventing it from occurring in the first place. They work with industry to employ practices that will eliminate slavery.

Be Slavery Free:

- Educates consumers with the knowledge that they need to choose slavery-free products.
- Networks with civil society to work together to end this heinous crime.
- Lobby governments for better regulations and guidelines to stop slavery.

What advocacy opportunities they offer

Current campaigns include:

- Uyghur forced labour
- Chocolate Industry
- Tea
- Seafood
- Cotton

Refugee Advocacy Network (RAN)

www.refugeeadvocacynetwork.org.au

What they do

The Refugee Advocacy Network is a broad coalition of Victorian organisations who have come together to advance a more just, humane approach to refugees and asylum seekers in Australia.

The Baptist Union of Victoria forms a part of RAN's broad coalition through its participation on the Victorian Council of Churches.

What advocacy opportunities they offer

The RAN offers practical assistance and hosting of refugees, petitions, encouragement to visit relevant MPs and Senators and education on refugee issues and the implications of proposed and passed legislation. They also organise public advocacy and awareness raising events.

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC)

asrc.org.au



What they do

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre is Australia's largest human rights organisation providing support to people seeking asylum.

Their programs support and empower people seeking asylum to maximise their own physical, mental, and social wellbeing. They champion the rights of people seeking asylum and mobilise a community of compassion to create lasting social and policy change.

Baptist involvement in the ASRC is through the support of the Australian Council of Churches.

What advocacy opportunities they offer

The forms of advocacy available are through petitions, form letters and phone calls to MPs and the Prime Minister as well as social media campaigns. They also arrange campaigns around getting children out of detention and have a focus on encouraging Australian youth to be involved in these issues.

Common Grace

commongrace.org.au



What they do

Common Grace is an online Australian Christian movement for justice. They exist to inspire and organise Australian Christians to think, speak and act like Jesus for a more just world. Common Grace seeks to be a gracious public Christian voice that is both provocative and compassionate, and one that helps to reframe public attitudes toward Christianity.

What advocacy opportunities they offer

Common Grace is a diverse community of people passionate about Jesus and justice campaigning on four key justice areas:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice
- Climate Change
- Justice for people seeking asylum
- Domestic and Family Violence

The Alliance For Gambling Reform

www.pokiesplayyou.org.au



**ALLIANCE FOR
GAMBLING REFORM**

What they do

The Alliance for Gambling Reform is a collaboration of organisations with a shared concern about the deeply harmful and unfair impacts of gambling and its normalisation in Australian culture. They campaign for reforms of the gambling industry that reduce the harm it causes.

What advocacy opportunities they offer

The Alliance provides resources, research, communication and advocacy tools for those interested in engaging in influencing gambling reform.

Ministers, Members of Parliament, and Senators

The most current source of names and positions for Federal and State Parliamentarians is on the respective parliamentary websites.

Australian Government

http://www.apph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/

Victorian Government

<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/members/>

Start to Build Your Own Church Advocacy Calendar

Depending on the issues your church decides to pursue active and intentional Advocacy around, you can connect in with local national and global initiatives and awareness days on those issues. You will gradually start to build a calendar of dates and issues around which you can focus the awareness raising and communications planning for your church

As a start, here are some key dates for issues the wider Baptist family, and our BUV communications and resourcing will be acting towards:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| JAN | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aboriginal Sunday |
| MAR | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• International Women's Day• International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination• Harmony Week |
| APR | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• World Earth Day |
| MAY | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Reconciliation Week |
| JUNE | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• World Environment Day• Refugee Week |
| JULY | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NAIDOC Week |
| SEP | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BUV's Justice & Advocacy Week• Converge – Australian Baptist Ministries Lobbying gathering in Canberra with pastors and leaders |
| OCT | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Freedom Sunday• Mental Health Week |
| NOV | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women |
| DEC | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• International Abolition of Slavery Day |



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