

THE MEETING



You will probably have less than 30 minutes for your meeting with the MP. Don't waste time getting to the point or on insignificant issues. Be specific and clear about the problems, and what you want. You should cover three main areas in your meeting:

How does this affect the MP's electorate?

Consider bringing along another resident or a community advocate to the meeting to tell their story. If you do this, ensure that your guest is aware of the context of the meeting, and keep them on track.

What am I asking for?

Consider the key reforms you would like to see. For example, do we need a Retirement Housing Ombudsman, better regulation of fees and charges, or higher training and accreditation standards?

What do I want the MP to do?

Tell the MP that there was recently a Parliamentary Inquiry into the retirement housing sector, and that the Victorian Government's response was disappointing.

Political parties are preparing their policies they will offer to voters for the 2018 Victorian Election. You could ask that the MP's party takes a strong Retirement Housing policy to the election.

You could also ask that the MP to contact the Minister for Consumer Affairs to get an update on the implementation of the inquiry's recommendations, or that the MP makes a public statement about the need for reform.

Think about these questions before you attend the meeting. Be clear and prepared.

VICTORIA VOTES 2018

RETIREMENT HOUSING MATTERS

Make it fair and affordable

ADVOCACY KIT FOR
RESIDENTS AND FAMILIES

COTA Victoria, HAAG, RRVV, Consumer Action
November 2017

MEETING WITH YOUR LOCAL MP

There is real momentum for change at the moment, but we won't see better laws for retirement housing residents unless our state members of parliament are motivated to make this change. We need you to contact your local MP to explain why we need reform, and what they should do about it. There's no need to be worried about contacting your state member of parliament. Local MPs meet with their constituents all the time, and they are interested in hearing about the issues that are concerning their local community.

Here are our top tips for contacting your local MP, and how to make the most of your meeting:

1. Find your local MP

Retirement housing is regulated by the Victorian Government so you will be contacting your state MP.

If you are not sure who your local MP is (or how to contact them), search the parliamentary website here: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/members/>

You can also find your electorate by searching the Victorian Electoral Commission website here: <http://www.vec.vic.gov.au/>

2. Do your research

Before you contact your local MP, find out some information about them. Check their website, social media or media releases to see what motivates and interests them.

Are they in government or opposition? Do they have a ministry or a particular interest? Have they visited your village or park before, or have you voted for them previously? The more you know about the MP, the better you can tailor your pitch for a meeting.

3. Call your local MP's electorate office

Start off by giving the MP's electorate office a call. MPs receive huge numbers of emails every day, so calling can cut through. You will probably speak to a staff member rather than the MP themselves. This is fine, as they arrange the meetings.

If you would prefer, you can also send a letter to your MP to request a meeting. There is a template letter at the end of this Advocacy Kit. Make sure you follow up your letter with a phone call.

4. Be clear. Be prepared. Be brief

When you call your local MP's electorate office, introduce yourself and where you are calling from. Make it clear that you live in the MP's electorate. Clearly explain the reason for your call, and that you would like to have a meeting with the MP to explain your concerns.

Consider outlining your experience living in retirement housing, such as how long you have lived there, the main problems you have experienced, and the effect it is having on your community. You may wish to take along a retirement housing advocate (such as someone from RRVV, HAAG, COTA or Consumer Action) to build your credibility with the MP's office.

Don't talk too much — keep it short (no more than 5 minutes).

Give the staff member enough information to convince them that they should get you an appointment. Offer to send through more information by email if that would help. Staffers are also busy and deal with a lot of calls on a huge variety of issues. They really appreciate clarity and brevity.

5. Arrange a meeting

During the call, make it clear that you would like to meet with the MP. Following the call, be sure to email or write to the office to confirm the meeting details. Ask for the best email address to contact the staff member during the call. Be patient and flexible about meeting times. MPs are busy and receive lots of requests for meetings.

6. Meeting your MP

Turn over for our guide to getting the most out of your MP meeting.

7. Follow up promptly

Make sure you follow -up after the meeting by thanking the MP via email. Maintain your relationship with the MP by keeping in touch about important new developments or issues.