



ADVOCACY - advəkəsi

noun/public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.

Every person is created in the image of God, with inherent dignity, value, and voice. However, sometimes our systems and structures can silence particular voices and often those voices belong to those who are vulnerable and marginalised. As a Sisterhood we have always endeavoured to pursue justice, so we pray, we give, and we seek to use what is in our hand, which includes raising our voice.

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” (Proverbs 31:8, 9). One practical and effective way to raise your voice is by contacting your local government member to share what you and your local church believe in and stand for. Policy makers are elected to uphold and represent the views of those in the communities they represent. That's YOU. You and your church have the opportunity to frame national discussions that lead to decisions that will bring change within our borders and beyond. We have prepared this 'ADVOCACY TOOLKIT' to help you!

The first thing that we all have to do is work out what we do believe and are willing to advocate on. In this we don't want to usurp the role of your church or denomination and therefore we are not giving you a definitive statement or position paper to advocate from, we just want to give you the tools to help you to raise your voice about what YOU have convictions about. We don't want to engage in the politics of this issue, only justice.

We encourage you to do your own research - including talking with your local church Pastor about their position on issues regarding refugees, asylum seekers and immigration. Look at your denomination's position to help frame what you and/or your church believe and you can advocate from that position.

We want to help equip and support you to raise your voice and speak up for refugees and those seeking safety however that looks for you.

A BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO REFUGEES.

Every human being, regardless of race, religion, gender or background is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26,27) and is therefore of equal value to God. This means that every person should be treated justly and with respect, bearing in mind that at Creation the earth was intended to be developed for the common good not just for the fortunate few (Genesis 1:28).

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were commanded to be good to the foreigner in the land, remembering that they were once foreigners and slaves in Egypt (Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:33,34; Deuteronomy 10:17-19). They were also to show justice to the vulnerable (Leviticus 24:22; Zechariah 7:10). In doing so they were reflecting the inclusive, merciful and loving nature of God.

In the New Testament, Jesus reaffirmed this attitude towards the stranger and those in need (Matthew 25:35-45) and he expressed such care as something that is done not only for the stranger but also to him. In addition, we are called to show hospitality to the stranger (Hebrews 13:2) and to those who are not in a position to return it (Luke 14:12-14).

This is all summed up in the command to love God and love our neighbour as we do ourselves (Matthew 22:37-40). In case we are tempted to think that our neighbour is only our fellow Christian, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) which makes it clear that our neighbour is anyone who has a need and that it includes even those who could be regarded as our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48; Isaiah 16:3).

As the church, while respecting our government and the law (Romans 13:1-5), we should be a safe and inclusive community for all migrants, refugees and asylum seekers both in practical actions (Matthew 7:12) and in public advocacy (Proverbs 31:8, 9).

Today's communication options have led to a proliferation of website, email, and Facebook petitions. On a daily basis these petitions flood into political offices. The petitioner often remains nameless. The workload of the Member of the House of Representatives (MHR) and their office staff is significantly high responding to constituent inquires, community service projects, parliamentary responsibilities, and community forums to name a few. Responding to every petition and petitioner is simply not possible. A face-to-face approach from a delegation of people living in their electorate is far more powerful.

Louise Markus - Member of Parliament, Australia, 2004-2016

MEETING WITH YOUR LOCAL ELECTED MEMBER.

STEP 1

Research.

Identify who your local elected member is. Based on your research you can decide to write to your local councillor, directly elected mayor, Member of Parliament or Member of the European Parliament. You can find them on www.writetothem.com

Have a look at their website and gain some insight into their work, activities and what is important to them.

Note all their contact details, especially email and office phone number.

STEP 2

Send an email.

Draft a personal email requesting a meeting. The email should outline the following:

1. A brief description of the issue you wish to discuss and questions you would like to have answered.
2. An expressed understanding that their time is valuable.
3. A clear request to meet with them at their earliest convenience.
4. Who is to be in attendance at the meeting, if it is only yourself or a small group.
5. If more than one person, list the

names of each person and clarify that they reside in the Member's electorate.

6. If you are a delegation from your local church, make that clear. Introduce the church, where you meet, how many attend your services and what you do in the community. **NB:** It is important if this is the case that you have received permission from the church leadership. Again list all names of attendees.

7. It is important that either at the beginning or end of the email you include your residential address and a phone number that you can be contacted on. For a church delegation, a church address may be used. The Member and his/her team will prioritise people who reside in their electorate.

8. Remember to thank them for their time and also thank them in advance for the opportunity to meet them and discuss this important issue.

STEP 5

Appreciation.

A day or two after the meeting send a brief thank you email, thanking them for agreeing to make representations to the Minister or local Council on your behalf.

Conclude by expressing that you look forward to their response.

STEP 3

Follow up with a phone call.

If you haven't heard back within 10 working days follow up with a phone call. Remember the office and Member can be dealing with thousands of emails a day and up to a hundred phone calls.

Be respectful and understanding.

Ask to speak to the person who manages the Member's diary, explaining that you have requested a meeting. Suggest that you could meet the Member during their political surgery.

Have the email in front of you to refer to; this will help the staff member to locate the email and simplify the process.

The staff may offer a meeting with one of the Member's staff, be grateful, however stress that you wish to meet with the Member directly.

Be prepared for a scheduled appointment to take time; the Member has parliamentary and other responsibilities that are locked in.

STEP 4

Meet with your local Member.

Be on time.

The time allocated for a meeting will be 15 to 20 minutes on average.

Prepare the points you wish to raise. A one page document with the points listed to present to the Member would be helpful.

If you attend as a small group or delegation, choose a spokesperson to start off.

Ensure you thank them for their service to the community, acknowledging some of the activities identified in Step 1.

Ask what their approach to the issue is.

Run through your points as listed.

No surprises: don't bring additional people without warning and use social media etc. without discussing it with them.

Ask them to make representations on your behalf regarding the issue/s you have raised with the appropriate portfolio Minister.