

LETTER WRITING 101

A good campaign is multi-faceted- we all know that. But a campaign is not really complete if letter writing is not up to par, and it can let other facets down (like protests, media publicity and personal meetings) if we don't do it correctly. This guide will run you through the basics of letter writing to make sure that what you want to say gets heard by the people that need to hear it, whether that be a Member of Parliament, a non-government organisation, or a private company.

To write a good letter, first you need to know who you are writing to. There two types of people that lobbyists want to contact- primary and secondary. A 'primary' is someone who has direct decision-making power. In Australia this can be the director's board of a private company, or a Member of Parliament in charge of a particular portfolio. This can often be the most effective way of communicating however it can be difficult to get a reply. If this is the case, you may find it is easier to contact a 'secondary'- someone who may be able to influence or put pressure on the 'primary' in order to make favourable changes.

Confirm you are sending it to someone who is it actually relevant to. If your letter is not succinct, easily understood and relevant chances are it will end up in the bin. Form letters that are copy/pasted verbatim are also less likely to reach their intended target on the small scale (though when used on a large scale can be quite effective). Add your personality and style to the letter so that it engages the reader.

Make sure your letter is set out properly so it flows logically. Size 12 fonts such as Times New Roman or Calibri are appropriate. Comic Sans is not. Make all text black where possible and make the formatting easy to read. Make your writing style appropriate as well- keep fluency in mind and make sure it is grammatically correct. Not all errors will come up in spellcheck so have someone proof-read for you. Any referenced literature (media articles, legislation etc.) should be truthfully paraphrased or directly quoted using quotation marks, and not taken out of context- this will help make sure your letter is taken seriously, as context is important.

Finally- triple check the contact information for both the target and yourself! It needs to be right so they can contact you and so the letter reaches them in the first place.

Name of recipient
Organisation (if relevant)
Address
State, Postcode
Phone Number

Name
Organisation (if relevant)
Address
State, Postcode
Phone Number
Email (if relevant)

20th December 2011

Dear (individual),

First paragraph: Introduce yourself. Say whether you are writing on behalf of just yourself, or an organisation or collective/group of people. Introduce the issue- why are you writing? For example, if an event triggered this, identify it. You should state why you are writing to this person and their relevance and involvement with this issue.

Second paragraph: Address your interests or concerns. Identify exact ways in which the person reading the letter will benefit from participating- this may mean something like more votes, better publicity, public standing, or improved health outcomes for a relevant population. Make sure you provide relevant background information.

Third paragraph: Start a new paragraph with a new issue you are raising. Remember to back it up with facts! We expect this from everyone who communicates with us so it's only fair for us to do it when communicating with them. Use specific cases (as recent as possible), quotes from individuals, legislation that may be relevant, news and media articles.

Final paragraph: Do not introduce any new information in this paragraph. Its sole purpose is to state what exact action you would like them to specifically take on your behalf. This could be sending information on a company position, issuing a formal apology or statement, voting on a bill, or coverage during Question Time in parliament. Reiterate that you would like them to contact you should they have any queries – and if this issue is time sensitive, provide a date so that the recipient knows when they have to reply by.

Closing: Yours sincerely,

(Your signature)
Your name here, printed
Your title or organisation if relevant

(CC: who else has also received a copy of this letter)

(Attached: What else, if anything, is attached to this letter- this may be appendices, news articles, a petition etc.)