

What is Community Organising?



Community organising is a term that is being used more and more in Australian social movements – but what does it really mean?

Community organising builds power by connecting people with shared interests to take action.

This approach recognises that significant social change tends to come about through the coordinated action of a number of people, rather than by isolated individuals.

Organising aims to shift relationships of power.

Organising does not focus energy on educating a key decision-maker of the merits of a policy, it aims to make adopting a particular position in their political interests. By either avoiding negative pressure or potentially winning more support through the change.

Characteristics of organising

Organisers organise organisations: The role of an organiser is to develop relationships with people and connect them to an organisation which is capable of winning change.

Strategy: Having a clear path from the current situation to the desired outcome is key. Direct communication, such as one-to-one conversations, is the most valuable tool in the organiser's toolkit to shift people's thinking and move them to action. Tactics that use direct communication include door-knocking and phone calls.

Actively listening to people and identifying their concerns, motivations and values. For example, when campaigning for renewable energy you may meet someone who is primarily motivated by jobs and regional development. You could leverage those concerns into action for renewable energy – but if you focused on convincing that person to support renewable energy because of the need to reduce carbon emissions you may quickly lose their interest.

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Recruitment: Always thinking about how to grow the numbers of people who are prepared to take action with you.

Developing leadership: To have an impact it isn't enough to just increase the number of people involved. People need to be prepared to take increasingly influential action, such as moving from signing a petition, to volunteering to doorknock, to coordinating a team. Leadership doesn't need to be hierarchical, you could see it as many people with defined roles taking responsibility for making things go well.

Training and development: You and your team might not always have the skills and confidence you need to do a task. Reach out to GetUp at takeaction@getup.org.au for training or resources if you've noticed a missing skill in your group.

Engage those most affected: Connect with people from relevant communities, backgrounds, or with particular shared values or interests. For instance, if you're running a petition for local hospital funding don't forget to reach out to nurses and doctors to join and lead your campaign.

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