

Ask the Tough Questions



This election, why not head along to local political events attended by your MP or candidates, and ask them direct questions about where they stand on the issues. The actual logistics of attending a political event and having your question heard takes a fair amount of effort. But the reward in getting them on the record is definitely worth it!

Preparation

Pick your issue

Choose one federal election issue you're passionate about that affects your local community. For example, cuts to education funding, hospital funding, renewable energy, or fossil fuel subsidies.

Find out the MP or candidate's position on your issue

For example, have they voted against fossil fuel subsidies? Have they voted for cuts to federal funding which will impact your local schools and hospitals? Follow this link to see how your MP has voted on key issues: <https://theyvoteforyou.org.au/>.

Choose your question

When you're deciding what to ask your MP or candidate, think about how best to frame that federal issue to make it relevant for your local community. A great question will be short and punchy, and force the MP or candidate to give a yes or no answer. It's good to have a second question ready, in case someone asks something similar.

Example question: *"MP, can you guarantee that federal cuts to health funding - cuts that you voted for in Parliament - won't mean less beds and worse off emergency wards at our local public hospital?"*

Find out where the MP or candidate will be

The hardest part is figuring out where your target will be ahead of time. Plan ahead by calling their campaign office, signing up to receive their emails, check out their Facebook page, and read relevant media. Do they have any routines you could use to your advantage? A John Howard-esque exercise schedule or a favourite coffee shop or cafe?



Ask the Tough Question



At the event

Arrive early

This is especially important if the candidate or MP is popular, and you expect a well attended event. You want to get up the front, as close to the candidate as possible, so they'll see and hear you.

Be in the candidate's path

Many candidates want to shake hands and meet as many constituents as possible at events. These informal, unscripted contacts are extra opportunities to ask your questions. Position yourself close to the candidate's path, and ask your question as you're shaking their hand.

Always remain calm and polite

It's always important to be polite and respectful. It'll also warrant a more positive response from the candidate, their staff and the media.

Bring a friend!

There's no need to do it alone. Why not bring a friend along for support, or to ask a question too?

Note down their answer

Did your MP or candidate say something interesting, or make a commitment? Write down their response as soon as you can while it's still fresh in your mind.

Let GetUp know!

If you got a response from your MP or candidate, let GetUp know so we can spread the word. Email takeaction@getup.org.au to tell us what question you asked, which MP or candidate it was, and their response. Please include your full name and electorate so GetUp can share your story with the rest of our community.

*Adapted from 'Bird Dogging Candidates' by Move to Amend.
Available at: <https://movetoamend.org/toolkit/tips-bird-dogging-candidates>.*

