

Writing a Letter to the Editor Guide



Ever sat down with your morning cuppa, opened up the local paper and had a read over the letters to the editor? They're often opinionated, informative and sometimes downright odd - but the humble letter to the editor has never been more powerful!

So, in the lead up to election day, GetUp members will be inundating their local media with thoughtful, well-written letters calling for real local action on the most important federal issues. **Will you join us?**

Local letters with big impact

Letters to the editors of local or state newspapers and magazines can be seen by thousands of voters across the electorate, and have greater local impact than national publications.

Candidates, MPs and staffers alike trawl local papers to see what issues are firing up in their community, and where pressure is building. Getting your letter published is an effective way to raise community awareness and get your issue on the agenda.

Tips for writing your letter:

- **Choose one idea or issue** - make it the sole focus of your letter.
- **Make it timely** - your letter is more likely to be published if it reflects on a recent occurrence, or recently published by the same paper.
- **Keep it local** - your letter is more likely to get printed and will have more impact if you write about how that issue affects the local community.
- **Be yourself** - don't be afraid to use your own words, and include a relevant personal experience/concern.
- **Keep it under 150 words** - most papers won't print anything over 200 words.
- **Respect submission deadlines** - look them up, and stick to them.

How to write an impactful letter

Step 1. Choose the most strategic publication

Step 2. Pinpoint one federal election issue

Step 3. Frame that issue for your local area

Step 4. Call on your MP and candidates to do something

Step 5. Send it in!

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Step 1: Choose the most strategic publication

Which paper will have the most influence on your MP? If you live in a regional electorate, you might find that your local regional paper is most effective, while in urban electorates a local or state-based paper is the best bet. Find a list of your local or state newspapers here: <http://www.newspapers.com.au/>

Make a special note of your paper's letters to the editor word limit, submission deadline and the email address or website form where you should submit your letter.

Step 2: Pinpoint one federal election issue

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

Step 3: Frame that issue for your electorate

Before you start writing, think about how to best frame the issue for your local community. Even though your letter will address a federal election issue, you should think about it through the lens of your local area.

Example 1: Education

You might be passionate about public education funding - it's a key federal election issue which will have a big impact locally. You might write about how federal cuts will trickle down to affect local schools, leading to fewer teachers' aides, bigger classrooms and a decline in numeracy and literacy.

Example 2: Hospitals

Cuts to health and hospitals funding is a huge election issue that will impact everyone. You might write about how federal cuts could see fewer beds at your local public hospital, longer waiting lists for surgery, and understaffed emergency wards.

Example 3: Climate change

Is your electorate already feeling the extreme impacts of climate change? Depending on where you live, you might write about how federal inaction will lead to more extreme weather events like devastating cyclones, droughts and floods, the loss of farming industries, or forced migration to the cities due to rising unemployment.

Example 4: Fossil fuel subsidies

The government hands out billions of dollars in fossil fuel subsidies to big polluters annually, and it costs your local community. You could write about the vital services fossil fuel subsidies rob your community of -- like a better health system for our elderly, and a better education system for our kids.

Example 5: Renewables

Is renewable energy a big issue playing out in your electorate? If so, this is your chance to write about how stronger investment and support for renewables, like wind and solar, could power the local economy - creating more sustainable jobs, cleaner land, water and air, and a better future for our kids.

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Step 4: Call on your MP and candidates to do something

The most powerful letters to the editor call on the MP or candidates to improve, mitigate or resolve that local issue. For example, you might call on the MP and candidates to make a pre-election commitment to reinstate local hospital funding. Make sure your call to action is realistic and within the power of your MP and candidates to do.

Step 5: Send it in!

Incredible work, now it's time to submit your letter! Some papers will ask you to copy your letter into the body of an email while others will require you to use their website form. Whatever the format, be sure to include your contact details, including your real name, address and phone number. Most publications won't publish your letter without this.

Share your story with the GetUp community

Your letter to the editor story has the power to fire up members all over the country to do the same. Email your photos and a copy of any published piece to takeaction@getup.org.au. Include your full name and electorate so GetUp can share your story with the rest of our community.