



# MP ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE  
FOR DEMANDING AN  
END TO ISRAEL'S  
GENOCIDE IN GAZA**



**APAN**  
Australia Palestine  
Advocacy Network

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This toolkit provides an overview of our political lobbying campaign, as well as practical tips and advice for lobbying your MP in support of APAN's campaign for an end to Israel's genocide in Gaza.

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# Introduction

For the past year, we have all witnessed Israel's brutal genocide in Gaza.

During this time, APAN has met with countless politicians to demand Australia take urgent action. Devastatingly, it has not been enough to create change. For our government to take notice, we need you.

**This toolkit is designed to support you, advocates, allies and community members, to engage with your elected representatives strategically and effectively. It draws on the political leverage that you have as a constituent, but it also provides guidance and information to help you make an ask that is strategic, and aligned with ours.**

All our voices are critical in demanding accountability and justice for Palestine. A successful political lobbying campaign relies upon us using our collective might to influence change.

Every single action helps. Whether you send an email, make a phone call or arrange an in-person meeting, they all have an impact. This toolkit will provide you with guidance and advice on how to successfully lobby your MP.

Together, we can make sure our government understands that the Australian community will not remain silent in the face of Israel's human rights violations.

We will not allow our government to be complicit in Israel's genocide in Gaza, its apartheid, its occupation in the West Bank and its state-backed terror in other parts of the region.

Let's harness our influence to compel our leaders to uphold their obligations and stand firmly for justice in Palestine.

# The time to act is now.

There is a genocide happening in Gaza. This is only the most recent iteration of Israel's illegal occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza since 1967, and Israel's ongoing ethnic cleansing since the Nakba in 1948.

Illegal settlements being established all over the West Bank and Jerusalem, which the International Court of Justice have ruled as illegal under international law. 722 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since October 7.

Prior to the most recent genocide, an illegal blockade of Gaza by Israel saw more than 50% of Gazan's suffering food insecurity, unemployment, limited access to essential services including healthcare, and the significant restriction of movement of citizens for the past 17 years.

Since October 7 2023, more than 75,000 tonnes of explosives have been dropped on Gaza by Israel. [Medical journals](#) estimate that up to 186,000 Palestinians could have been killed; health, water, electricity, sewerage, and transport infrastructure destroyed; and whole neighbourhoods flattened. The purposeful destruction of critical, life-supporting infrastructure like hospitals is considered a war crime.

At least 97,303 people have been injured, many in significantly life changing ways. This is exacerbated by the lack of functioning medical facilities to treat injured people. More than one quarter of these injuries are not being treated adequately.

**Australia has an obligation to demand Israel end the genocide.**

# Australia's international obligations

Australia's actions on Gaza are not merely a matter of morality.

The fact is, Australia has *international legal obligations* to respond swiftly and decisively when genocide occurs. This is consistent with Australia's obligations under the Genocide Convention, which Australia signed in 1949 and ratified in 1951.

The obligations to act is **even more relevant when the perpetrating state is an ally – like Israel is.**

Countless reputable experts across the globe have been forthright in describing Israel's actions in Gaza as genocide. There is no excuse for denial.

Despite this, our government is evading any action to sanction or curtail Israel. It can get away with this by obfuscating the reality of what is occurring in Gaza. Politicians are avoiding the term "genocide". Instead, we've heard passive terms like "catastrophic humanitarian crisis" and a "refugee crisis" to describe Gaza. Conveniently, both of these terms remove Israel's role as perpetrator and its culpability, and consequently, Australia's obligations to act.

By equivocating on what this really is, Australia is negating its obligations to prevent Israel's genocide.

You can read more about APAN's position on this, and about the importance of ensuring our politicians use direct and accurate political language [here](#).

# What can Australia do?

You may have heard that there isn't much else Australia can do to compel Israel to end its genocide, with politicians saying "we've already called for a ceasefire."

There is much, much more Australia can do. For example, in response to the Russian occupation of Ukraine in 2022, Australia responded rapidly with more than 1,200 sanctions.

These included travel bans on complicit individuals, trade bans between Australia and Russia, and a ban on commercial activity between Australian and Russian entities. These sanctions were swiftly and unilaterally enforced, with no need for encouragement from international institutions like the UN.

At the time, both Anthony Albanese and Penny Wong (then in opposition) called on the Liberal government to expel Russian diplomats. Australia also joined another 43 states in referring Russia to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Australia immediately expanded and resourced the resettlement of Ukrainian refugees, providing visa extensions, expedited processing, as well as offering temporary protection visas to more than 11,500 Ukrainians.

## **In contrast:**

- Australia has not imposed a single sanction against the Israeli Government, individuals, nor companies involved in Israel's genocide of Gaza.
- Australia has not called for the expulsion or recall of ambassadors.
- Australia has not joined the ICJ case against Israel.
- Australia has approved fewer than 3,000 visas for individuals fleeing Gaza, and has rejected more than 7,000.
- Australia froze funding for UNRWA based on flawed Israeli allegations.

# What is APAN asking government to do?

For the past 12 months, we have consistently called for the following six policy actions to be undertaken by the Australian government.

**Impose sanctions:** Impose targeted sanctions on Israeli government officials, military leaders, individuals and entities involved in Israel's genocide, occupation and apartheid regime.

**End all support for Israel:** This includes cutting off economic, industry, trade, diplomatic and military relationships, cooperation schemes, investments and programs.

**Cut off the weapons:** Suspend all arms agreements, cooperation and deals with Israel, including the export, import and transfer of arms, parts, components and dual use items used by Israel in its assaults on the Palestinian people.

**Stop Australians funding the occupation:** Cancel the DGR status of any Australian charities that contribute to, support or benefit from Israel's illegal settlements.

**Hold Israel to account:** Proactively support investigations into Israeli war crimes and cooperate with the International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court.

**Respect Palestinian rights:** Uphold international law and recognise the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

For more detail on APAN's policy asks, head [here](#).

# How can you help our campaign?

Unfortunately, it is not enough for APAN to make demands of the Australian Government.

The most compelling and persuasive factor for our politicians is whether or not they will be re-elected at the next election. Election cycles in Australia are short, and while MPs might have a particular stance on an issue, they are also conscious of their public reputation and image.

This is useful, as it means supportive voices from a diverse range of constituents are incredibly powerful in persuading a politician to act on a particular issue. Your job is to demonstrate to them that refusing to act on this issue will impact their reputation and electability.

Advocating for APAN's asks doesn't require you to be an expert. Simply by reiterating our calls, and communicating to your MP that this issue will determine your vote at the next election, can be hugely impactful.

By demonstrating broad community support to your MP on this issue, you're contributing to this campaign in a powerful way.

There are many ways to do this. How you convey this message is entirely up to you. It could be as simple as signing one of our postcards, or sending an email. It could be as complex as holding a formal meeting with your MP, or holding a letter-writing workshop in your community.

Every single effort contributes towards the greater image we are trying to paint to our MP – that if they fail to act on Gaza, they *and* the government will be held to account.



# What is the key ask of your MP?

There are three key parts to your MP ask, in alignment with APAN's campaign. Regardless of how you make your ask, these are the key elements to convey.

## **First, outline your vision.**

Providing a realistic explanation of what you expect of the government in this scenario is a critical first step.

*"I expect a world where Palestinian rights are respected, Israel is held to account for its war crimes, and Australia lives up to its expectations as a state that values human rights, justice and the rule of international law."*

Follow this up by outlining APAN's six foreign policy asks, listed on **page 5**.

## **Make a specific, concrete ask of your MP.**

Now that we have outlined our vision and expectations of the government, we need to make a tangible and actionable ask of the MP as an individual.

*"We want you, as our elected MP, to take note of our concerns and policy asks, and pass them on to the Foreign Minister. We would also like you to request a response from the Minister and let us know when you've received it."*

## **Make your ultimatum.**

Your MP needs to understand that their electability as an individual MP, as well as the party's electability are both at stake over this issue.

*"It's important that you understand and reiterate to the Foreign Minister that the government's actions over this issue will determine my vote at the next election. I won't be voting for someone who doesn't act to end the genocide."*

# How does it all work?

Not everyone knows how our Federal Parliament and political structure operate, and that is okay. It is a complicated system – but it's important that we approach our MPs through the correct channels, and use the political mechanisms available to us as constituents.

## **Which office do I choose?**

All MPs have an electorate office, which will usually be in the biggest town or busiest suburb of their electorate. Some MPs might have two offices, if they're in a geographically large electorate. These are the offices that you should approach them through, rather than their parliamentary offices in Canberra. Their electorate office is where they serve their constituents, including speaking and meeting with them about issues of concern – like Gaza.

## **How are decisions made?**

Generally speaking, if an MP is a part of a political party, then they're bound by party position. Obviously, there have been exceptions to this – Senator Fatima Payman is a great example of someone departing from party policy to follow their conscience and international legal obligations on this issue.

In our advocacy, we must both hold our MPs accountable for party policy, and emphasise to them that they have a responsibility to represent the concerns of their constituents.

For this reason, we're asking you to ensure your MP passes your concern on to the Foreign Minister. It's important that the pressure trickles upwards through the parliament and government on this issue. It's also a way of mitigating MPs "passing the buck" and dismissing your request by saying that they are not responsible for party policy on Gaza. MP's should pass constituent concerns onto their parties and represent us in parliament, and if we can generate enough of these messages, we may begin to shift the government.

If you are represented by an independent, then you'll likely have even more impact on their position as they are not bound by party policy.

### **What if my MP is already supportive of Palestinian rights and justice?**

If your MP is already supportive on this issue, that's great! It's still worthwhile getting in touch with them to let them know you appreciate their position on this matter, and to thank them for being a good MP.

You can still request that they pass your message onto the Foreign Minister, and/or speak up in parliament about it.

You could also spend some time writing directly to the Foreign Minister, or reaching out to one of your federal senators - particularly if they are a member of the party in government.

### **What if my MP is not in government?**

If your MP isn't in government, they may tell you that there is nothing they can do about the issue. This isn't true – they can, and should, still pass your concerns on to the Foreign Minister.

Even if your MP or their party isn't part of government now, it doesn't mean that they won't be in future, or that they shouldn't still be deeply concerned about the issue. We want to create change across the board, which will make it systemic and long-term, regardless of which party wins the next election.

Communicating with your MP on this issue is still very worthwhile. But as above – if you're feeling deflated, you could also use some energy writing directly to the Foreign Minister, or one of your senators.

### **What if they won't meet with me?**

If they absolutely will not speak with you on this issue, you could request a meeting with their staffer instead. They act on the MP's behalf, and will take note of your concerns and pass them on. You should still write to your MP, expressing your disappointment that they will not meet, and ask them to pass your concern on to the Foreign Minister regardless.

# General advice for MP engagement:

## **Get to know your MP:**

The best thing you can do to prepare is undertake some research on your MP.

Who are they? What are they passionate about? What are their key issues? What is their position in the parliament – are they in government? Do they hold a Ministerial portfolio, are they on any committees?

Have a look at the [Hansard search tool](#), on social media and on Google to see if your MP has made any comments on Gaza, Palestine or Israel. Sign up to your MP's mailing list, and check out [They Vote For You](#). All of these resources should give you some sense of their position on Palestine.

Discovering all you can about your MP will help you in finding common ground, or being tactical in how you approach this issue.

## **Manners matter**

We know that in this awful situation, it's difficult to constrain our emotions. This is a dire situation that reflects a disturbing legal and moral failure on the part of our government. However, when we are angry or upset we run the risk of not delivering our message properly. We also run the risk of being depicted as "fringe activists" which is an easy way to dismiss our very real concerns. It's unfair, but it's a reality we must face. Being calm, collected and clear is the best approach right now.

## **Ask for a response**

Your MP is obligated to respond to you as they are your elected representative. Regardless of whether you call, email or write, make sure to ask your MP to respond.

## **Talk about the impact of this on you and your community**

Talking about the real life impacts of Israel's genocide in Gaza, and appealing to shared values will be far more compelling than facts or statistics. Every MP will claim they care about families, women or children. Use this to your advantage.

## **Use it as a research opportunity**

Your conversation with your MP is as much about finding out things about their decision-making process, relevant political processes, and any perceived obstacles to Palestinian justice as it is about influencing their policies. Take good notes of what they say, and always question them about their stance.

## **Follow up with your MP**

Always follow up any conversation with your MP with an email to reiterate your key points. This not only reinforces your message but makes sure the detail doesn't get lost. Often it can take several reminders to get a response from an MP. Consistent follow-ups show your commitment, your persistence and can prompt them to take action.

## **Don't waste your time arguing**

If your MP doesn't value human rights and Palestinian lives, that is profoundly disappointing. But in this scenario, it's also not worth wasting your precious time and energy to try and convince them. Make your key ask anyway.

# Phone your MP's office

Calling your MP's office with a concise, polite and to-the-point message is a quick way of engaging with your MP. They do get a lot of phone calls, but taking the time to make a practical ask, and convey your message as a genuine enquiry that warrants a reply will make all the difference.

Use this script below to make a call.

## Introduce yourself

*"Hi there, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a constituent of \_\_\_\_\_ electorate. I'm calling as i've got a request that I'd like you to pass on to my MP \_\_\_\_\_."*

Feel free to include any other short pieces of information about yourself that may indicate your values or personality.

*"I've lived in \_\_\_\_\_ for 10 years, and work as a local teacher at the primary school."*

## Explain what you're calling about, and how it makes you feel

*"I'm calling today because of what is happening in Gaza. I am utterly distressed by the situation and feel absolutely let down by the government and its inaction on this issue while thousands of Palestinians are being killed by Israel, who I know Australia considers an ally."*

*"I don't believe that the Australian Government has done all it can to take action in preventing this genocide. What is happening is a genocide, and there are countless reputable voices that have stated it is."*

*"Australia is a signatory to the Genocide Convention. I know that this means Australia is obligated to take action."*

## **Explain what you want to see happen**

*“There are several concrete policy actions that the government should be taking, and we’ve seen them do these things in other situations – like when Russia invaded Ukraine.”*

*“I would like to see Australia implement the following policies:*

- *Sanction Israel*
- *End all support for Israel*
- *Cut off the weapons*
- *Stop Australians funding the occupation*
- *Hold Israel to account*
- *Respect Palestinian rights*

*“By taking these urgently needed actions, Australia would be meeting its international legal obligations and my expectations that it is a responsible, moral country that values human rights and justice.”*

## **Make your ask**

*“Now I understand that as an MP, \_\_\_\_\_ is just one Member of Parliament and cannot implement these policies individually. However, I would like to ask that you take note of my ask and concerns, and ask MP \_\_\_\_\_ to pass this message on to the Foreign Minister on my behalf.*

*“I will follow this phone call up with an email so that you have my ask in writing.*

*“I would also like for MP \_\_\_\_\_ to respond to my request, and also let me know once the Foreign Minister has replied.*

## **Issue your ultimatum**

*“I would also like you to pass this message on to MP \_\_\_\_\_: This issue will determine how I vote at the next election.”*

# Writing prompts

A personal letter, written by you, is much more compelling than an auto-generated email campaign. It shows that you are a real person with a voice and a vote.

Write your MP a letter or an email, using these prompts.

## **Introduce yourself**

Tell your MP about a little bit about yourself, your community, what you do for work or for fun. We want to develop an image of yourself as a constituent, citizen, community member, rather than a faceless person with an opinion. Try to convey your values as a person.

**Write a little about why it is that you care about Palestine - what was the thing, or moment that drew you in?**

**How have the past 12 months made you feel? How has it made your community feel?**

**Tell your MP what you want to see happen, and make your ask.**

Use the “key ask” on page 5. Don’t forget to include all three elements.

**How can you demonstrate community support for Gaza in your letter?**

Use anecdotes. Are your friends and family upset about this? Have you been to any big rallies? Has anyone in your local mums group, or book club, or sports club spoken about this? Use this to show your MP that you are not a lone voice on this issue.

**Leave contact details so your MP can reply, and make sure you follow up in a few weeks for a response.**



# Meet your MP

MPs receive a lot of calls and emails about an issue, but assembling a small team of constituents and taking the time to speak with your MP in person demonstrates a lot of commitment to the issue.

## Scheduling your meeting

It usually takes a few weeks to get a meeting scheduled with your MP. Begin with a phone call to the electorate office to enquire about a meeting. To make life easier, you can look at the [Parliamentary Sitting Calendar](#) to work out your MP's availability.

You will need to explain over the phone what it is you would like to meet about. We would suggest explaining that you would like to meet to discuss Gaza, but you have a specific request that you would like your MP to help you with.

They might suggest you email instead, but it is important to remain steadfast and persist with the meeting request. You can suggest to meet via Zoom if it is easier.

## Finding some comrades

Recruiting a few community members to come along is a great thing to do. You won't need to do all the talking singlehandedly and there is strength in numbers. Think about recruiting people with a range of different lived experiences to demonstrate diverse support.

## Demonstrate community support

It's important to demonstrate that this is a significant issue in your community. Consider ways that you can demonstrate this. If you have time to run a local petition before your meeting, or if you've got any photos of big Palestinian rights community events, these are both helpful. If you're stuck for ways to demonstrate this, get in touch with us at APAN. We can likely help!

## What supporting information will you take in?

Rather than having to remember and relay all the critical information about international law and our six policy asks, we suggest taking in a printed version of APAN's fact sheets to hand over to the MP. Then you can focus on the rest of your message. We have linked to this at the end of this toolkit.

## Roles – who will do what?

It's crucial that you take the time to practice with your meeting comrades. Work out who will do what - who will introduce the topic? Who will make the ask? Who will take notes? What will you do if your MP doesn't respond well?

## During and after the meeting:

### Set an agenda (and stick to it!)

Despite all your hours of preparation, it is unlikely you will get more than half an hour with your MP. It's critical that you don't waste time and that you have a strict agenda for how the meeting will run. Don't get sidetracked – you can use our [Conversation Skills for Gaza toolkit](#) to help you structure your conversation.

MPs will sometimes try to sidetrack you, by changing or shifting the focus. Be alert to this, and try to bring the conversation back to the agenda.

Sometimes they might want to challenge your views. Respond calmly but then move on to the next item on your agenda. Alternatively, sometimes having a new person in your group take over the conversation can help change these dynamics. Be aware of the tone of the conversation, and don't lose control of the conversation.

### Introduce yourselves

Despite the short timeframe, take the time to build rapport with the MP. Spend a minute introducing each person and highlighting any relevant information about your context and connections with the local community. But don't take too long!

## **Introduce the topic**

Be fairly brief here. We don't need to give an exhaustive overview of the background and the context. Just explain that you'd like to speak about Gaza, and explain why it is that you care. Remember, values and human experience are more compelling than facts and statistics.

## **Make your ask**

Use the information on **page 5** to make a clear and concise ask - which you will have practiced and perfected in your group beforehand. Make sure you get an answer!

## **Follow up email**

Send a follow up email immediately afterwards. Share with them any notes you took, highlighting any actions that arose from the meeting. Provide them with digital copies of any resources you provided, and remind them of your key ask. Remember to leave contact details for your group.

After a fortnight or so, contact the office again to see whether your MP has had a response from the Foreign Minister yet. Continue to follow up until you get a response!

## **Take to social media**

A great way to hold your MP to account is by posting about your meeting on social media, publicising your ask and tagging your MP in it. This way, they'll know you intend to hold them to account. Remember to keep the tone positive, and you will need to take responsibility for monitoring any commentary happening on the post. Remember, we want to leave a positive impression.

# What else can I do?

## Host a letter or postcard-writing workshop

Why not take the chance to bring lots of community members together, and have everyone write to their MP all at once? Personalised letters have the most impact. We have a ready-to-print postcard [here](#), which you can add a short message to.

## Launch a local petition

It's likely that you've signed big digital petitions on Gaza over the past few months - but why not take the chance to scale it down, and run one locally? By directing it to your local MP, and limiting sign-ons to those in your electorate, you'll be demonstrating some real electoral power in this tactic.

## Head along to the MP's events

Most MPs have community "listening" events, which offer an opportunity for them to meet with and hear about local community concerns. You can use this as an opportunity to raise the issue of Gaza with your MP. Check out your MP's social media, or mailing list to find your MP's next event.

## Write a letter to the paper

Writing to the local paper is a good way to get an issue into your MP's orbit.

## Invite your MP to a community event

Inviting your MP to a local film screening, panel discussion or rally is a good way to make sure they are aware of all the Palestine rights activities happening in your community.

## Find a popular local endorsement

Is there a local public figure, a popular business, a local advocacy group in your electorate? Don't underestimate their ability to sway public pressure, raise awareness and influence politics. Spend some time bringing these local identities on board with our campaign.

## Organise a phone-banking session.

Why not organise for a group of your friends to make targeted calls daily for a few weeks? This way, you can generate a sense of the broad community support for this issue.

# Report back to APAN

It's important that you let APAN know that you've reached out to your MP with our campaign asks!

We would love to know how you went, what was said, and whether or not you received a response - positive or negative.

By letting us know, we can keep track of how many communications MPs have received on the topic, which is useful information for us if we meet with them in future.

The easiest way for you to report back to APAN is by using this [form](#).

Alternatively, you can get in touch with us by email, and we'd love to have a chat about your meeting!

You can email us at any time on [contact@apan.org.au](mailto:contact@apan.org.au)

# Useful links

[APH MP Contact Details Search Engine](#)

[Hansard Search Engine](#)

[Parliamentary Sitting Calendar](#)

[They Vote for You website](#)

[APAN's "Six Policy Asks" Fact Sheet](#)

[APAN's "Genocide: Language for Justice" Fact Sheet](#)

[APAN's "Genocide in Gaza" Fact Sheet](#)

[APAN's MP Engagement Register Reporting form](#)

[Conversations for Gaza Guide](#)

[APAN's Political Postcard download](#)