

Action Guide

WRITING TO POLITICIANS

Have you got something that you want to tell an MP? The Government can only do a good job if it hears from the people it serves.

Every day, politicians make heaps of decisions about things that affect your community and your life. If you want them to make decisions that will be good for you, grab a pen and paper and let them know what you think.

Check out these great reasons why you should get your voice heard by politicians:

- It is really important for politicians to understand issues from many different perspectives, including young people's points of view.
- Lots of politicians **DO** want to hear from young people, especially Ministers who have a lot to do with young people, like the Minister of Youth Affairs or the Minister of Education.
- Letter writing and emailing politicians **WORKS**. Heaps of government decisions are influenced all the time by letters from everyday Kiwis.

You could write a letter by yourself or organise a letter writing campaign on a particular issue and get lots of young people writing in with the same message.

Who should I write to?

The first thing you need to work out is what kind of MP you need to write to. It could be:

- an electorate MP
- a list MP
- a Minister
- the Prime Minister.

If you have a concern about a national issue that fits under a Minister's portfolio, you should write to them. Ministers expect to hear from groups of people who are trying to get change on a particular issue that the Minister is responsible for. For example, if you want to let the Government know what you think about NCEA, you could write to the Minister of Education. If you are concerned about pollution, you could write to the Minister for the Environment.

What Ministers hear through letters and emails from people is really important in helping them make decisions that affect us all.

How can I contact them?

It is easy to find out who your local electorate MP is. To find your electorate MP's name and contact details, go to www.parliament.nz and click on 'Members of Parliament'. Here you can find all the electorate and list MPs from around the country.

You can find out who the Cabinet Ministers are, what their portfolios are and their contact details by going to www.beehive.govt.nz.

You can write to any MP, Minister or the Prime Minister for FREE (no stamps needed in New Zealand).

You must include their full name and send it to this address:

Freepost Parliament
PO Box 18888
Wellington

Will they write back to me?

Most MPs respond to letters from people in their community. This response will probably talk about their party's ideas, government policies and their own ideas on the issue you have written about.

Ministers get help from their staff and from the Ministries they are responsible for to respond to letters.

What should I write?

Here are some important things to help you get your message across:

- Explain why a particular issue is important to you and your community/young people or New Zealanders as a whole.
- Don't think that the politician will already know everything. Remember, you may be educating them on a youth perspective or about some facts they don't know.
- Be clear and to the point.
- Be constructive. What do you think should happen to solve the issue you are raising? What are you asking the politician to do?
- Include your values and opinions on the issue, and back up your argument with facts where needed.
- Make sure that you include your name and address, so that they can write back to you.

For more information about how Parliament works, check out the 'Central government decision-makers' action guide.

**STAND UP
AND BE
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**AOTEAROA
YOUTH VOICES**

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**MINISTRY OF
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

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