

Lobbying Guide

Info Sheet 1

2026 Budget Campaign



Welcome to the wonderful world of lobbying! We know many people who work in Neighbourhood Houses/Centres have fantastic lobbying skills. The sector does an incredible job of obtaining scarce resources for their organisations and programs from many different sources.

This time the **entire sector** is lobbying for increased resourcing. This takes a lot of effort but your individual and collective lobbying will make a huge difference to the success of our campaign. Even though every house and centre is technically independent, you are part of a much broader collective sector and it is important that we act as one united voice to have the maximum impact.

What is Lobbying?

- Some people may think that they do not know how to lobby, but most people have had some experience of “lobbying” in their lives even if it was “lobbying” their parents to get them that new toy at Christmas!
- There is nothing new or complex about political lobbying. People have been lobbying their elected representatives for thousands of years to support their particular organisation, sector, or idea.
- Put simply lobbying is just asking a decision maker to support your interests.

We have power!

In addition to being 400+ strong and independent community organisations, our reach extends to:

- 185,000 participants per week
- 3,500 workers
- 1200 volunteers
- ...who support 4,000 community groups across the State.

It's important that we enlist all of these in demonstrating our people power!

- Companies and interest groups actively lobby politicians because it works. We have seen the effectiveness of lobbying in the Neighbourhood Houses Sector where the ONLY global sector increases have ever come from a combined lobbying effort. No individual house has ever received an individual increase to their NHCP funding.

Lobbying politicians is a normal part of democratic decision making. Politicians expect to be lobbied (that's why they are politicians!).

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How Do I Lobby in this campaign?

Below are some simple steps and ideas how you can lobby in your local area: providing this info to them?

Step 1: Have a cup of tea (preferably with some others!) and have a chat about who and how you could lobby. Some questions to consider:

- Do you know your electorate and who your local State MP is? Do they know about the great work you do?
- You can find your electorate here : maps.vec.vic.gov.au
- You can find your local State MP here: parliament.vic.gov.au
- Who will be the candidates standing in the coming 2026 election? (this may not be known till 2026)
- Can you meet with your local MP and candidates to discuss the campaign and the urgent need for funding for the sector? (Given this is going to be an election year all MPs will be keen to meet with community members)
- Who else should be involved? Participants at your house? Committee members? Do they need information on the campaign?

PRO TIP! Develop a presentation of all the great work you/your network /cluster do! The data from your annual survey and participant survey can be very useful here, and you can request extended data by your LGA, Network and/or electorate from NHVic.

- How can you ensure that you bring all the wonderful things your particular house does into the Campaign and awareness of MPs and candidates?
- Are there other houses/centres in your electorate that you can collaborate with? There is always more persuasive power in a collective approach. (TIP: Ask your Networkers if you are unsure)
- What other ways can you lobby your local representatives?
- Where can you get support if you feel a bit daunted? (Networker/Other Houses/ NHVic)

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Step 2: Organise to meet with your local MP and/or Candidates.

- Meeting in person is the most effective way to lobby. The sooner you can organise a meeting the better!
 - If you'd like additional support during the meeting, make sure to let NHVic and/or your Networker know and we will do our best to be available. Otherwise, you could see if there is another Neighbourhood House in your electorate that could join you!
 - You can write/email or call your local MP's office to make an appointment outlining why you would like to meet and include the NHVIC 2026 Budget Submission if emailing.
 - It does not matter if your local MP is serving in the current government or not, all MPs need to be aware of this campaign.
 - Sometimes your local MP might not be available. If they really cannot attend then meeting with Electoral Office staff is still better than not meeting at all.
 - Ensure everyone who is attending the meeting is clear on what the campaign is about and who is saying what. (see Key Messages).
- Ensure that you speak about the community benefits to supporting the campaign.
 - Have data for your individual house/network/clusters on hand. If you're unsure, email us at info@nhvic.org.au or contact your Networker for this data.
 - Don't be afraid to speak up and speak passionately, however always be respectful.
 - Ensure that you let them know that you will be letting your community and rest of Neighbourhood sector know about the (hopefully!) great outcomes of your meeting.
 - Always ask how they are personally going to support/or not the campaign. What actual actions are they going to take. i.e. writing to the Premier, Treasurer, etc. (It is very easy for politicians to say they "support" something but we need to ensure there is real action along with the support).
 - Use your time wisely and keep on point. It is very easy (a particular skill of some politicians!) to get distracted from the purpose of your visit and you have limited time.
 - Always take photos and notes! Inform the MP that you will be taking a photo and possibly uploading to social media etc. and ask them to do the same.

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Step 3: Follow Up! (Always!)

- Following up your meeting is critical and fairly simple.
- Write a letter or email thanking your MP/Candidate for their time and also summarise your understanding of the outcome of the meeting. i.e. how did they say they would support/or not support the campaign. Is there any further information you need to provide? Make sure you cc in all members who attended. If you are attending as a collective of Neighbourhood Houses ensure that all of your names and your houses are included in the sign off.
- You could also request a further meeting in a month or so to ensure there is ongoing awareness of the campaign.

OTHER IDEAS FOR ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING FOR 2025-26 CAMPAIGN:

- Hold an event and invite your local MP/ Candidates to speak! Afternoon tea, community barbeques, festivals. Ask them to speak about how they are going to support your local neighbourhood houses and the campaign.
- You could also create photo opportunities at your event e.g. MP “serving” community lunch, helping out in a garden, talking to young people. These opportunities are highly valuable to the Campaign and also the MP!
- Get your local media involved! Let them know if you are meeting or you have a campaign event. Let them know the key lobbying points. Ensure you include your local angle!
- Consider hosting a “Meet the Candidates” Forum (closer to the election). This could be done in collaboration with other houses.
- Let your creativity flow! For example, in the past there have been local “community walks” to MPs offices to deliver the cards in person by a huge crowd of people, community campaign days etc. (Please keep NHVic informed of any events etc. you are planning or have going on – we have a form here to make it simple!)
- Develop a presentation of all the great work you/your network /cluster do! The data from your annual survey and participant survey can be very useful here, and you can request extended data by your LGA, Network and/or electorate from NHVic.
- Upload photos and key ‘quotes’ to social media, Facebook, twitter, Instagram. Make sure you tag MPs and the Minister Ros Spence. Don’t forget to tag NHVic and use the hashtag #keepnhdoorsopen!