CCLA's Grassroots Lobbying Playbook

How to grassroots lobby the CCL way with how-to guides, stories and examples.

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What is Grassroots Lobbying?

Grassroots is basically people power – the political power of having many ordinary people work towards a common goal. There are hundreds of examples of powerful grassroots movements – #metoo, suffragettes, women's liberation, American Civil Rights, the French Revolution, votes for Australian First Nations people etc.

A grassroots movement can be started by one person – think of the impact of Greta Thunberg, Gandhi, or triggered by a single event – think of Rodney King's death, the Port Arthur massacre, the assassination of Martin Luther King. Grassroot movements:

- Are led by citizens / members of the general public
- Have a small economic footprint
- Have limited connections
- Have an individual focus

When grassroots lobbying remember to:

- Appreciate and acknowledge the work that is done in your group.
- Find ways for people to get to know each other and work together.
- Have time in meetings for one-on-one and small groups.

How does grassroots play into broader political lobbying?

Every time you take an action to express your support of a carbon dividend or other political actions, you are engaging in grassroots actions. Just by being a member of CCL, you have taken a grassroot action.

But to have political impact, we need our actions to be *en masse*. By many people demonstrating their desire for a particular change to take place, the decision makers see that there is political will for this outcome and face pressure to make change occur.

So, one useful step that you can take as a grassroots action is to encourage others to take action for that same goal.

Democracy is not a spectator sport!

50 examples of Grassroots action you can take – right now!

1. Get together with some like-minded friends to form an action group
2. Join an existing CCL group and encourage others to join and take action
3. Talk to friends and colleagues about CCL, carbon dividend, climate change
4. Use social media to raise other people's awareness
5. Write to your MP and to newspapers
6. Sign petitions
7. Call radio stations
8. Join demonstrations
9. Use Getup and Change.org to create, distribute and garner support for petitions
10. Tabling
11. Public speaking at schools, town hall events
12. Chalking - climate messages in chalk in public places
13. Signage
14. Handing out flyers and brochures
15. Financial donations
16. Bumper stickers
17. T-shirts with messages
18. Street theatre
19. Gathering media reports for others or self to respond to
20. Participating in your local group
21. Building community relationships with other groups, including climate groups
22. Planting trees as a group
23. Putting up posters e.g. library, local café, unis
24. TED talks

25. Stalls at Community Events – Naidoc Week, Sustainability Fair, Earth week
26. Like-minded groups e.g. Electric Vehicle Association, Australian Conservation Foundation, organic market
27. Lobbying
28. Movies about the environment
29. Scavenger hunts
30. Sending Christmas Cards with a climate message
31. Organise a phone call with your MP
32. Talk to journalists
33. Seek endorsements for ACD from business leaders and community leaders
34. Attending/running information sessions on issues
35. Meet with private groups to advocate for climate change e.g. companies, investors, banks
36. Running Sausage sizzles at Bunnings
37. Groups in front of offices
38. Join committees in the workplace, schools, community
39. Newsletters
40. Talking to friends or people you know in communities
41. Dropping things in letterboxes
42. Bush care days
43. Park run with banners/T-shirts/ dog jacket
44. Start a community garden and discuss the importance of eating locally sourced foods, and ugly veggies to reduce food waste
45. Vehicles with signs
46. Teaching in schools
47. Letter writing groups
48. Form a recycling group
49. Bike to school events
50. Sponsorship and advertising

Engaging with the Outside World

Write letters/articles/news items to the local paper

Letters to the editor are popular with readers. A well written letter has the potential to **change the view of thousands.** Politicians take notice of letters and assign daily reading as a task to staff. Some letters may even get “top billing” in a national paper. Here are some tips and tricks to help you get published…

Keep it short + punchy

The editor gets hundreds of letters each day, and they will only give yours about 15 seconds of attention before deciding if it's publishable. **Get to the point quickly.** 50 to 150 words is the optimal length.

Make it simple yet creative

Communicate **one idea** only. The best letters are short, tell personal stories and/or convey a strong emotion. Humour and wordplay are great. If you can come up with a catchy, clever title, even better. Write as though you're addressing the editor – i.e. be polite and use a similar "voice" to your target publication.

Be topical and timely

Tie your letter to a current issue. If responding to an article in today's paper, submit your letter before midday on the same day. If referring to a previously published article, use brackets and quotation marks to reference it, such as:
DESPITE significant government subsidies, the viability of the Portland aluminium smelter has been questioned for years ***("Power share to save smelter", Editorial, 30/10****). Part of the reason...*

Make a sandwich

This is a great structure to start with:

1. A **positive** first sentence outlining why you're writing (Top slice of bread).
2. A sentence or two describing the **problem** (The filling).
3. A sentence or two describing the **solution** (The filling).
4. A powerful, clever, witty last sentence or question (Bottom slice of bread).

Proofread

Before sending, don't rely only on spell checker – **read it aloud**, give it to a friend to read, run it through online grammatical tools such as Scribens of Grammarly.

Team up

Receiving several different letters on the same topic on the same day can sway the editor.

How do I submit?

Just put the letter into the body of an email and hit send. But **include your name, address and telephone number** in case the newspaper will call you to verify or request your approval for an edit. Alternatively complete the newspaper's online form.

Here are some major newspaper's contact details (but always check them on the publication's website).

The Age: letters@theage.com.au
Sunday Age: sunday@theage.com.au
The Australian: letters@theaustralian.com.au
The Australian Weekday Magazine: magazinefeedback@theaustralian.com.au
The Australian Financial Review: edletters@afr.com.au
The Herald Sun: hsletters@heraldsun.com.au
The Sydney Morning Herald: letters@smh.com.au
The West Australian: letters@wanews.com.au
Canberra Times: letters.editor@canberratimes.com.au
The Saturday Paper: letters@thesaturdaypaper.com.au

A Handy Template to address the Editor

Newspaper name
Date
Catchy title of letter – optional
Text of your letter
Your name, suburb and state
Your FULL address
Your phone number

Inspiring Examples of Letters to the Editor

Collinsville power station

IT IS good that Dawson MP George Christensen wants jobs for his constituents (Collinsville coal result a win for regional Queensland, DM 2/9/20).

But he should not mislead them. An independent report by PWC called The Future of Energy - Australia's Energy Choice concluded that new High-Efficiency Low-Emissions coal plants would result in a poorer economic outcome than renewables.

Any proper feasibility study will reach the same conclusion. BHP has announced a transition from coal-fired power to renewables. The Collinsville power station will not be built.

Mr Christensen needs to accept this and work to create real jobs with a real future. In the energy sector, these jobs are clearly in renewables.

Ray Peck, Hawthorn, Victoria
Daily Mercury 4/9/2020

Shooters off target

THANKS, Damien Noonan (Your View, 4/4) for owning up: shooters have been stocking up to go hunting.

Why not? The state's hunting authority seems to be deliberately undermining efforts to flatten the curve for coronavirus.

It failed to publicise the new ban on hunting and is OK with quail-hunting on private property — where most of it occurs anyway. Duck-shooting is still planned for May, just as coronavirus nears its peak!

Regional areas plead for tourists to stay home. Why let shooters undermine the huge sacrifices we're all making to protect the community?

Joan Reilly, Surrey Hills
Herald Sun 8/4/2020

Dr Di Rayson's contribution "encouraging"

It is encouraging to read about Dr Di Rayson's contribution to Words for a Dying World: Stories of Grief and Courage from the Global Church.

The Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) is a good example of the climate justice work she espouses.

ARRCC was recently part of an email campaign which successfully lobbied two Korean finance companies to walk away from the Adani coal mine.

When street protests were allowed their Climate Choir sang many songs outside many offices, including the federal Treasurer's. They sell lovely t-shirts proclaiming that killing the planet is against our religion.

I hope that this honest book helps more people find the strength to engage in this essential moral work.

Thank you Dr Rayson.

Lesley Walker Northcote, Victoria
Manning River Times, Taree 9/9/2020

Further Resources

Many groups have excellent publicly available resources. We recommend these:

- Climate for Change MP Engagement Group (Scroll down on site)
- Climate Council
- Oxfam Australia
- The Guardian: How to Write Letter to the Editor — quite useful to see what the editor's views are.

Much of this information has been provided by Lighter Footprints. ***Lighter Footprints aims to influence Australian local, state and national decision makers to take the action necessary to halt global warming as a matter of urgency.***

Post items to social media

So, you want to make a difference to climate change? An easy way to do this is to use your social media as a tool to advocate for climate change.

You can reach huge audiences, sway peoples' opinions, find new supporters for climate action, disseminate information about climate change and coordinate other forms of action. All of this can be done from your home, at virtually no cost. Many successful grassroots movements have used social media (#metoo) - you can also make use of it!

Examples of Use of Social Media

- Create a post about an issue that you care about (e.g. Australian Climate Dividend) for your friends/followers. Try to get a discussion going. Keep creating posts on the same issue.
- Sign and share petitions on issues that you care about. Start your own petition on your issues — use organisations like Change.org and Getup which are interested in social reform.
- On Facebook, join groups that share issues that you care about. Like and share their posts to other groups. Create a post for that group and try to get discussion going. Create a group yourself and post engaging, up to date material and commentary.
- Follow and share material from climate change influencers on Twitter.
- On YouTube, find material relating to your issue and share it.

Where To Find Good Information to Share

- Follow particular thought leaders and share their dialogue — share tweets and posts across various social media platforms.
- Follow people who are opposed to your beliefs and share their dialogue — with a comment.
- Particular newsletters and sites such as Renew Economy, the Conversation, the Guardian and the Age.
- Join CCL Australia on Facebook where there is some in-depth discussion, as well as on the CCL Slack where people share great information and links.

Tips for Successful Posts

- Include an image, a drawing or a video link. Make it attention grabbing.
- Keep it brief.
- Use links for more detail — if you have an article to share; put in an intro, provide a summary or make a comment - then include the link for the full article.
- Be active — it is important to engage with your followers or within groups.
- Aim to create happiness, satisfaction and inspiration — people tend to read these tweets or posts.
- Use humour!
- Share stories, photos and/or links featuring the important work being done by CCL.
- If you start a campaign or a group, think about effective # tags that you can use to group your posts together. Keep monitoring it, interact with the other posters, comment and respond to them, keep posting new material.
- Keep your tone authentic and engaging; people who show that they genuinely care about climate change and who express their feelings are more likely to get engagement from their audience.

Tabling

Tabling Event (noun) Planned occasion where volunteers or organizers greet the public, engage them in their cause, and ask that they take further action towards their cause.

All you have to do is set up a simple table at a market or fair and have a friendly chat with people about our climate solutions.

Remember to...

- Have Fun: when you are tabling, be enthusiastic and friendly - make eye contact, say hello and smile.
- Choose a location with lots of foot traffic and a time when people aren't rushing (for example, a farmer's market) and have at least 2 people at your stand.
- Rehearse your key message (AKA an elevator pitch), to give yourself confidence with your material.
- Make Your Stand Attractive. Your stand needs to draw people in. Think about what will attract people to your table and what visitors are likely to pick up once you have their attention. Statistics can be displayed prominently, so that passers-by will stop and read and give you time to engage with them. Have posters, flyers, postcards etc. and other information. Make it readable from a distance and colourful.
- Bring people to you. You can have give-aways, competitions or games. If you have games or colouring competitions for children, it brings the parents and children to your table and gives you time to talk to the parents while the children are occupied.
- Stay in Touch. Consider having a computer with a Google Form, a spreadsheet, or a sign-up sheet with pens to record the names and email addresses of interested people. Make sure that your forms aren't blank – people don't like to be the first. You can always put your own details on the form.
- Include a Call to Action. Offer specific ways that people can take action to support your cause. Asking people to sign a petition or an open letter or fill out a postcard calls for their immediate action. Ask them to join your organisation.
- Social Media event promotion.

Clipboarding

'Clipboarding' – is a simple, productive and effective way to spread awareness with little resources, all you need is a clipboard and a questionnaire relation to your issue and what actions your MP should take on them. Print out some simple information to gather ideas and opinions from the local community. Surveys conducted in this way are useful for presentation to MPs or community leaders when you are lobbying them.

A CCL Clipboarding Story by Ian Hunter

Background

By the beginning of 2022 we had come to the end of our rope. For almost two years, in the Richmond NSW electorate, CCL's attempts to do tabling at farmers' markets and other local events had been frustrated by COVID restrictions.

Then, in February and March 2022, two unprecedented floods two weeks apart, devastated many of our local communities. Just when we were most motivated to canvas support for building political will to address climate change, normal methods of reaching out to our community seemed closed. The following will run you through how we readjusted our approach.

Directions:

During business hours on a Tuesday morning, I took my clipboard and spent a few hours visiting 33 businesses in the Tweed Heads area on foot. At each business, I engaged with local staff or the manager and left a copy of the questionnaire for collection next week.

Sample Script:

'*Hi, my name is Ian. I live locally on Piggabeen Rd. Last week during the floods we were cut off for a few days with Kennedy Drive closed and the internet also down for 8 days. We know a lot of people were affected much more than us. How did you and your firm go?*'

Listen and respond quickly leading into an explanation of why you are visiting. '*I belong to a group called CCL Richmond. We are a group of local volunteers.*'

Show your identification. '*We are not supporting any political party; however, we are interested in not only helping with the recovery but also in looking at what is causing the extreme flooding, bushfires and heat waves that we are having. Is that something you're interested in?*'

Listen and respond briefly identifying with any values identified. '*What we do is talk with local politicians asking for greater climate action. They understand what we are asking for, but they also keep asking what local people and businesses think. What would be your message to them?*'

Listen and respond appropriately. '*Can I leave this form with you to consider? You could share it with other staff, family or friends. Is it okay if I come back next Tuesday morning to collect the form and answer any questions you may have? My contact details are also on the back of the form if needed.*'

Listen and respond appropriately. Show thanks and appreciation for their time, even if they decline to complete the form.

Don't be phased by any response when you return next week. People may not have time to get the form completed, leave it at home, forget about it altogether or simply change their mind about partaking. Always find something to be grateful for and appreciative of.

Results and comments

- Thirty-one of 33 businesses engaged and accepted forms. Two businesses politely declined.
- Ten completed forms were collected on the following Tuesday. Most others wanted more time or indicated they would email the completed form to me later. Two others declined to follow up.
- A further seven completed forms were collected when I returned the next Tuesday.
- All 17 businesses indicated either "Very concerned about climate change" or "alarmed about climate change".
- All 17 businesses indicated concern about 4 or 5 climate impacts.
- All 17 businesses included the "Flooding or Drought" option in their list of concerns.
- Nine businesses wanted elected representatives to have the political will to "Introduce a Price on Carbon".

- All 17 businesses also wanted two or more of the following: “Promote transition to Renewables”; “Fund Climate Solutions Research”; “Work cooperatively across Parties”; or “Take the Long-Term View”.
- Individual messages to MPs ranged from “Let common sense prevail!” to concerns about the future of children and the planet.
- Most indicated that they did not want to be contacted by MPs. A few did.
- Before the 2019 bushfires 60% of Australians believed that climate change was a serious problem. After the fires the figure moved to 64%. Will the floods this year have a similar effect on Australian attitudes? (Australia Talks National Survey 2021)
- In 2021 Richmond NSW was the electorate with the highest climate risk in the State of NSW and yet 14% of Richmond NSW voters believed that “about the same or less action” on climate change is required. Will that % change after the floods? (Australia Talks National Survey 2021)

Overall, this was a very helpful strategy, I hope this guide propels your Grassroots Outreach to new heights!

Events

Join in community events. To see local events that CCL organises and supports, check out the CCL Facebook or reach out to join the email list.

Community Event Snapshot: Dungog Event Sunday, 5th July 2026 by Dennys Angove

The event was hosted by David Smith and Libby Doolan of the *Patterson, Allyn Williams Science and Ideas Hub* and *Lyne Together*. The latter organisation arose out of the voice’s movement for the *Lyne* electorate. The event was held in the *James Theatre* in Dungog. It was sponsored by CCLA, which was acknowledged during the event. Supper was provided by the local CWA. It was advertised widely and I was interviewed by Dungog Community radio earlier in the week.

I gave the first talk which was followed by Graham Creed, ex-ABC weather man. After Grahams’ excellent talk we had a question-and-answer session which went for about 45 minutes. During the last session I was able to reinforce the need for a carbon price and the need for personal power at the grassroots level to catalyse the political will needed by our elected representatives. People took about 30 business cards and 40 brochures. Richard Weller was present and was able to get some feedback for his talk which will be the next in the series to be held in September.

There were 76 people in the audience which was made up of about 35 people younger than 40 , including some HSC students. About 25 were aged below 65 and the remainder over 65. It was pleasing to see so many “young” people in the audience. There were also strong national supporters in the audience, all of whom sort me out and appreciated the talk. The feedback was very positive, including during the dinner at the local bowling club held after the event.

A very important contact was made with Adjunct Professor, Caroline Pidcock of the University of Newcastle, who recently launched the *Rural and Regional Climate Hub* at a *Women’s Climate Congress* held in Dungog on the 28th of June. Caroline was recently awarded a *Byera Hadley*

Scholarship to study "*The Architecture of (Net) Zero Emissions Housing*". It is expected that ongoing communication will continue with Caroline.

Speaking and Education

Volunteer to speak at educational institutions, business associations and/or other gatherings.

Lobbying

And of course, meet with your local State/Territory, Federal Members of Parliament, Local Council members and community leaders: check out the first playbook!