CCLA's Political Lobbying Playbook

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

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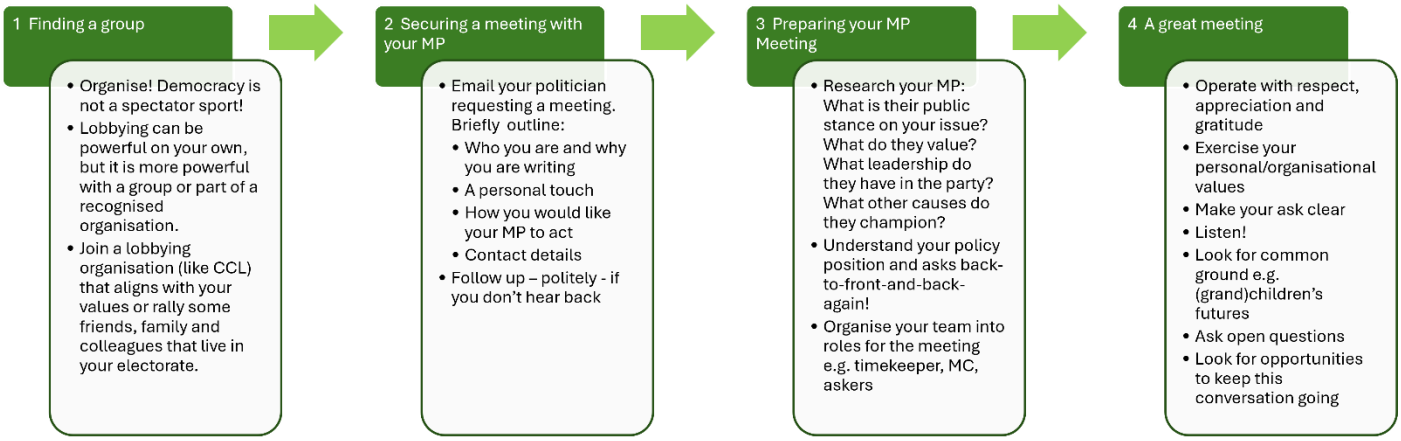
Introduction

Political lobbying is advocacy focused on influencing the decision-making of government through direct communication with Members of Parliament (MPs) and Senators.



CCL has built an enormous amount of experience and skill through 14+ years of lobbying across the world. At CCL, we aim to develop a long-term *relationship* with the person we are meeting. We would like to influence their views or even become a trusted advisor. Here are some tips you can use to achieve this.

When you meet, convey your position, your goals and your asks, while operating with respect, appreciation and gratitude. We aim to exercise the CCL values in the following ways:

- Be optimistic: lobbying is about solutions, not about protest
- Show integrity by being prepared, knowing what is important to your guest, what you might have in common, respecting their time and following up as promised
- Be non-partisan; CCL operates on the belief that one can find common ground with people of all political stripes

Common ground in a lobby meeting might be:

- Shared values, such as children and grandchildren's futures
- Shared social interests such as clubs, schools, hobbies
- Shared places such as the local electorate etc.
- Recognition and appreciation of things that our guest has achieved

The following four-step process is a great starting point for planning and preparing for any lobby meeting. It enables the team to allocate roles to each member and suggests a format for the first five minutes or so. From that point the meeting will follow the interplay between the MP and your group.

Four-step Process (1) Finding a Group

Organising

Lobbying on our own can be useful. Lobbying with a group of people with a common purpose is likely to be much more powerful. And lobbying as part of a national or international organisation with a common purpose is likely to be even more powerful.

So, if you can find friends, colleagues, neighbours or family members who share your concern and (preferably) live in your electorate, invite them to join you. And, if CCL's policies seem to align with you, please reach out to us and join our small but powerful group of concerned citizens.

Four-step Process (2) Securing a Meeting with Your MP

Once you have a group of interested people, connecting with your MP/MPs is a logical next step. The CCL value of relationship-building extends beyond us, towards our elected representatives and their influencers.

Crafting a personal approach

While each team will find its own way to connect with their MP, these are some of the steps that CCL recommends to help you get there.

- Do plenty of research to get to know who they are, what they value, which community groups they link with, what they said in their first speech, what they are posting on social media, etc
- Find out who their influencers are, people with power and influence in the community
- Record key findings in a bio
- Work out who wants to lobby and who would prefer a background role in research or support roles

Writing to a politician

The standard way to get a meeting with your MP is simply to send an email requesting a meeting. But first, it's important to decide who in your group is going to be your liaison, the main point of contact with the MP's office.

Top tips to make your letter or email stand out:

Use the correct title: unless you have an established relationship with the person you are writing to, it's polite to be formal in the beginning. Here is a link to: Find your Representative/Senator and how to address them

Introduce yourself and your issue: start your letter by saying who you are and why you are writing to them. If you are a member of their electorate, make this clear. Briefly mention any relevant connections in the community – a local community group you belong to, or a local business you work

for. Let the MP know if you have met them, and the circumstances. Try to think of something you can genuinely thank them for, and then do so.

Keep it brief: Your letter should be as short and simple as possible. Try to keep it to one or two pages. If you are asking for a meeting it can be less than a page. Stick to one issue per letter and use simple points to make your case. If the issue requires further explanation, include an attachment which sets out the extra information, or provide a reference to it.

Add a personal touch: It's important to explain why the issue is important to you. You can do this by including a relevant personal anecdote or experience. This will help make the issue real and tangible for your MP. Storytelling used in conjunction with statistics allows you to be rational and emotional. We need to appeal to the MP's head and heart. For example, you could explain how you've been impacted by the drought or bushfires, which are intensifying as a result of climate change. Or you could say why taking action on climate change is important to you. It can also be useful to include relevant facts and figures, refer to a recent news item about the issue, or highlight a local connection to the issue.

Be polite: Being polite and respectful in your letter is far more likely to achieve positive results than being insulting or abusive. An abusive letter is likely to be ignored.

Tell them what you would like them to do: Once you have told your MP how you feel about the issue, tell them what you want them to do about it. Clearly state the facts that highlight the need for urgent further action. Be brief and objective, used scientific data to persuade. Avoid hyperbole or embellishment. Provide an explanation of what needs to change and why. These are some actions that you might ask your MP to take:

- Agree to a meeting to discuss the issue you have raised
- Voting for or against a particular Bill.
- Asking them to raise amendments to a Bill (be clear about what these are).
- Speaking about the issue in Parliament to raise awareness.
- Asking a question in Parliament to gain extra information on an issue or raise its profile.
- Raising the issue with the relevant Minister or Shadow Minister or portfolio holder. If other MPs are also raising the issue, this demonstrates that there is community concern for the issue.
- Talking about the issue in the media to help raise its profile.
- Finally, always ask for a reply to your letter.

Provide your contact details: Include your first and last name, your address, telephone number, and email address.

Follow up: If you have not received a response after a month, telephone the MP's office to remind them about your letter and check when you are likely to receive a response. If you do not receive a response when expected, call again. MP's diaries are pretty full so it may take weeks to secure a meeting. Be patient, keep in contact and stay friendly, but keep trying until you succeed. Sometimes asking to speak to the diary manager will help. Persistent, but polite, constituents tend to get what

they want! Remember, your MP has a responsibility to represent you and to communicate with you. That is why they were elected and why they are paid.

Our thanks to www.oxfam.org and www.climatecouncil.org who provided some of this material.

Great Phone Calls

Some people prefer making contact by phone. If this is you, the thing to remember is that you are unlikely to be put through to the MP and will find yourself talking to a staffer. No matter! Staffers are integral to the process, and this is your chance to establish rapport and build connection.

You will need to prepare a short pitch beforehand with a few key points. The most likely result of your first call will be that the staffer will promise to follow up your enquiry and get back to you. Try to suggest instead that you will call back in a little while and then do so anyway if you haven't heard back within a week. Repeat as required, remaining friendly throughout these exchanges.

Other Ways to Get in Touch

A neat hand-written letter always gets noticed. Presenting yourself at the MP's office is also a sure way of getting attention.

Staffers, allies and influencers

Everyone who works in an MP's office is important to us. So, every interaction we have with any member of staff is important. Building relationships is central to everything we do so making friends with our MP's office staff needs to be central as well. Getting to know them, learning their names, understanding their roles and interests, making notes so you don't forget the details, engaging regularly and thoughtfully are all important. Even small valueless gifts and gestures can be appropriate. One volunteer famously gave a bottle of home-made ginger beer to a staffer which exploded but the incident became a humorous incident in a valuable relationship with the office.

Four-step Process (3) Preparing for your MP Meeting

Planning and preparation – researching and learning all you can as a team

Research Your MP

Find out about your member's stance on party issues, what leadership they have in the party, what committees they serve on, what causes or policies they champion, etc. Use a search engine to check their campaign website, social media accounts, and any other relevant sources of information.

Helpful resources:

- Open Politics Australia - specifically under the 'Memberships/Office holder or donor' section of your MP's profile page
- APH: Search for Members
- APH: Parliamentary Friendship Groups
- They Vote for You

- The website aph.gov.au contains contact information, biographies, voting history, transcripts of speeches and committee memberships.

Understand Your Current Policy Positions

Understanding your policy position inside out and refining your policy pitch means you can clearly communicate what you want from your MP making it easier for them to serve you. Presenting a solid and concise solution also builds your credibility. Understanding popular political rebuttals and creating rebuttals for their rebuttals, as well as being able to answer questions regarding the intricacies of your solution furthers this credibility. You want to present a clear and credible solution to maximise the chances that your solution is understood, remembered and acted on!

To understand CCL's policy position and use CCL's resources as a guide to creating your own policy position, follow our Policy Playbook and our blog Wisps of Clarity.

Research your Current Asks

They say a week is a long time in politics. This means that what we ask our politicians for is changing constantly. Working out your asks – primary and secondary asks - can help you select a topic that you can approach with your MP. It also gives you a broad range of topics you have prepared to fall back on if the conversation with your MP is longer or takes an unexpected turn. Use the research you have done to help you find a path specific to your local and political context.

As of July 2026, CCL's asks are as follows.

Primary Ask

Our primary ask is for legislation for a price on the greenhouse gas potential of fossil fuels where they enter the economy - – the Australian Pollution Price (APP) or the Polluter Pays Levy advocated by the Superpower Institute.

For some MPs this is too big of an ask so it's useful to have a few **secondary asks** for things that go some way towards achieving our primary ask - steps along the way.

Secondary Asks

- Implement the Fair Share Levy to ensure Australia gets its fair share from exported gas, including windfall profits from surges in the international market,
- Removal of all subsidies that support and incentivise the continued use of fossil fuels
- Halt to all new coal and gas developments in line with recommendations of the IEA, the IPCC and climate scientists.
- A review of the methods used to determine fugitive emissions released during fossil fuel production and distribution

- CCL supports the planned infrastructure improvements in the electricity sector and makes the point that a carbon price would greatly incentivise private investment and reduce the burden on taxpayer funds.
- Cap the fuel excise rebate at $50m for each company and use the revenue to assist the enterprise to transition to renewable energy
- Recognise the role of forests, vegetation and the water cycle in climate regulation and work with State governments to protect and restore forests, restore the water cycle and rehydrate landscapes across the country.

The team

A helpful way to operate as a lobbying team is to assign different roles to each person, so the load is shared. If you are part of a small group, some team members may have to take on more than one role. We allocate these roles to one another, as part of our preparation, before the meeting.

We suggest the team roles of:

Liaison

- Undertakes all or most of the communication with the MP/MP's office: build ongoing relationships with their MPs and their staff by maintaining regular personal contact and by coordinating the group's meetings and communication with that office. This can include updating the office with timely resources related to climate change, planning meeting agendas, or even inviting the staff to a local event

Team lead (someone who has lobbying experience)

- Oversees any research that is required
- Prepares the meeting agenda
- Makes sure the agenda is sent to all concerned, including the MP
- Decides on the allocation of team roles
- Acts as the MC during the meeting
- Makes sure we stay on topic during the meeting
- Conducts the debrief afterwards

Scribe

- Takes notes on the key points made, questions raised, others' observations discussed in the debrief
- Helps prepare a thank you and feedback email

Timekeeper

- Monitors the time
- Lets the room know when it's 5 minutes to time-up
- Records the approximate percentage that the guest spoke versus the volunteers

Appreciator

- *At the beginning of the meeting* shows genuine appreciation for something that the guest has said or done recently
- *At the end of the meeting* thanks them for their time

Asker(s)

- Says a few words about your/your organisation's purpose
- States your request and invites the person to share their thoughts about their solutions
- Make a supporting ask, if needed

Four-step Process (4) Having a great MP Meeting

CCL structures its meeting typically like this.

Opening

Open with a thank you and a brief description of your organisation if it has been a while since you met or it's the first time you have. Briefly introduce yourselves: each volunteer gives a 20 second introduction which helps create a personal connection and contextualise your meeting.

Sample introductions

My name is Bill Shute. I am a retired CEO. I live in Sydney's Northern Beaches in the Mackellar electorate. It seems to me that our way of life is slowly destroying us, all the material things like electricity, cars, big houses, central heating, etc. It is an immense challenge to fix this, and I feel compelled to engage.	My name is Pam Pitt, I live in the Flinders Electorate and have been a small business owner for many years. I am passionately concerned about climate change - I believe that we are custodians for the future and have a duty to protect what we have inherited. I want my 3 young grandchildren to have as good a life as I have had, but with climate change, I worry about this being possible.	My name is Sue Weser. I am a Public Speaking coach/trainer. I live in the Macnamara Electorate. The Climate Emergency is an issue that has been consuming me for many years, and it still does! The future of life on earth is at stake, unless we can come together and solve this problem. I joined CCL because I love CCL's proposed solution to reducing carbon dioxide emissions, via the introduction of the Australian Climate Dividend.

Then the appreciations, which highlight gratitude for what the MP has already done, for example, in their first speech, press conferences, that supports your cause and highlights existing common ground.

Discussion: meeting of minds

Then the first question is asked - the dialogue begins...

Listening is the most important skill!

After making your ask, listen closely – for the values, interests and concerns behind your MP's response. This helps you find common ground and respond in ways that move them toward supporting your policy proposal. Preparation (for example, CCL's Policy Playbook) gives you solid footing but remember that knowledge and information may not carry much weight in the highly contested, emotional and identity-based components of climate and energy policy. Approaching your representatives with respect, appreciation and generosity makes it much more likely that you communicate in ways that enable your representative to relax and be open to you. Having empathy for them – the position they are in, the pressures they endure, their life experiences to date, etc. - can help disarm the defensiveness that MPs have had to build up to protect themselves in the rough and tumble of politics. Remember that tone, posture and facial expression make up a large part of communication.

It is helpful to aim to:

- Listen more than talk
- Stay focused on their answer rather than planning your next point
- Reply thoughtfully in ways that enable them to feel heard, for example, by reflecting what the person has said "oh, so you mean that ..."
- Build a relationship such that you will be welcomed to a future meeting
- Use vocal prompts to encourage the speaker e.g. "oh, yes", "okay" "I see"
- Keep an open posture – face them, arms uncrossed, head inclined
- Maintain eye contact

Questioning

Open questions are also very important in any discussion. They will draw out more responses. Closed questions may elicit only a very short response such as Yes/No:

- 'Do you support climate action?' is a closed question
- 'What are your thoughts on addressing climate change?' is an open question

What to avoid

Focus on **respect, generosity and appreciation** helping avoid:

- arguing with your guest, making them wrong, trying to push your opinions
- interrupting (except to politely bring the discussion back on topic)
- talking over the top of your guest
- blaming your guest
- aggression, even when tensions mount

What if the Guest isn't Prepared to Engage?

- People can sabotage lobby meetings by deliberately not answering the question, by talking about other issues, by waffling on to fill up the allotted time. You can guide the dialogue back on track; e.g. "Yes, I'd like to get back to…".
- Sometimes you will meet with a guest who is totally opposed to any sort of climate action. It can be useful to politely ask about their sources which can sometimes help to plant doubt in their minds. But, once you recognise their opposition, draw the meeting to a close, thank them politely - and focus your efforts elsewhere. It is better to try to choose a guest where there is some likelihood of them taking some action as a result of the meeting.

Wrapping up the meeting

- Answer any final questions raised.
- Undertake to send information or materials to clarify our asks.
- Leave a one-page ask and other materials we have brought.
- Take a group photo - MPs often put the photo on their official channels and, with permission, CCL may use it in their publications.
- Try to organise another contact whether it be a follow up from the discussion (e.g. supplying material) or organising another meeting.

Your MP and their staff are busy people and are dealing with large numbers of people, requests and communications every day. So regular friendly communications and expressions of gratitude from you help to keep you in their consciousness so that whenever related issues come up, they may remember you and what we have to offer.

Remember the importance of starting and ending with appreciation! Your gratitude may also lead to them returning favours by sharing information and inviting you to events and meetings that may be useful to you as well. And importantly, it may lead to them seeing you as a reliable valuable source of policy advice.

Following up afterwards

Follow up is very important. Here are the main steps:

- Send or hand deliver a hand-written card, signed by all or by one on behalf of the team, thanking them for the meeting
- Write an email and/or a letter outlining what you think were the main achievements/outcomes of the meeting; any questions you were unable to answer during the meeting; providing information that you said you would send – or that you subsequently decided would be useful; and/or giving thanks for the meeting and for their time and attention
- Keep an eye out for articles, papers, letters to the editor that relate to your discussion in some way and share them with the MP and/or key staff members
- Try to have regular contact of some kind – always respectful, thoughtful and generous

What's it like being in a meeting?

Meetings are dynamic and depend on the many complex interactions between the group and your guest. Anything can happen! Here's a little taste of a CCL-MP meeting:

Hypothetical MP Meeting 1

Lobbyist: Thank you for agreeing to meet with us and congratulations on your election victory. As is now accepted universally, Australia needs to transition to clean, renewable energy sources. If we are to prevent catastrophic climate change, we need ambitious carbon reduction targets. What's your opinion about putting a price on carbon?

MP: The Australian electorate has made it very clear in the past that it does not want a carbon tax, in any shape or form.

Lobbyist: I totally understand - Australians do not want any new taxes. I'd love to tell you about a way to put a price on pollution, that is *not* a carbon tax. In fact, it would *pay* Australian householders' money in the form of a dividend. It is called the *Australian Pollution Price* (APP). Implementing the APP would help us achieve significant emissions reductions within the next 20 years. Have you heard about this scheme?

MP: No, it sounds intriguing. Tell me more.

Lobbyist: The APP is a *Fee and Dividend* scheme.

Here's how it works, in general terms - a fee is levied on the carbon content of fossil fuels at their source, for example at the mine, oil well or port of entry. This fee would start at a modest amount, say at around $35/tonne, as is currently the price of ACCUs, and would rise steadily each year. The money that is collected from the 80 or so producers is then returned directly back to Australian households in the form of a regular Dividend. The beauty of this scheme is that increasing the costs of fossil fuels encourages all consumers to switch to low to zero emissions alternatives; it incentivises investment in abatement, not just offsets. Thereby, moving us in the right direction if we want to reduce real emissions – not just emissions on paper. And providing a dividend to consumers means that any extra transition costs to them can be met. The Australian Taxation Office would monitor the collection of the fees and distribution of the dividends to Australian householders.

MP: Sounds interesting. Have you got figures on the money that householders would receive from the dividend?

Lobbyist: Yes. It is estimated that at $50/tonne, the lower 20% of households would be $1,300 p.a. better off. 75% of all households would receive financial benefit. Subsidies and regulations for renewable energy would no longer be necessary and could be removed. Estimates suggest the rollbacks have the potential to save the Commonwealth $2.5 billion per year.

MP: Do any other countries have comparable schemes?

Lobbyist: Yes, the EU through their CBAM and ETS, Canada through their industrial carbon pricing system and Sweden with the world's strictest national carbon tax at EUR138, AUD227.44/t CO2-e emitted.

MP: Very interesting…

Lobbyist: It was great to meet with you. Can I leave you with an information sheet and some other resources for you to read and to discuss with your colleagues?

MP: Yes, please. Thank you for meeting with me today.

Hypothetical Meeting 2

Lobbyist: Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with us and congratulations on your election win. We are delighted that climate action played such a prominent role, and we are very encouraged by what we have seen of the new government.

If I may, I would like to start by putting you on the spot! What do you know about our preferred climate policy, the climate dividend?

MP: I think I know the main points. You want to put a steadily rising fee on carbon over the next 10 to 15 years and distribute all the proceeds equally to everyone on the electoral roll. Is that about it?

Lobbyist: Yes, that's it exactly. What do you think of it as a policy tool?

MP: Well, that's a tricky one. You and I both know that what you propose isn't technically a tax, but we also know that the Coalition is 100% guaranteed to call it that. They even started calling their own safeguard mechanism a carbon tax during the election campaign when we said we wanted to strengthen it. Every poll that has ever been done on the topic reveals that people are strongly against a carbon tax. I can't see anyone in Australian politics going down that path.

Lobbyist: We understand that carbon pricing is a political minefield in this country, but "political impossibility" isn't a permanent condition. Look at what the 2026 government has done with changing negative gearing and capital gains taxes – these were also deemed political poison. In fact, recent studies by the Redbridge Group show that 66-69% of Australians agree on a Polluters Pay Levy and want to see more climate action. We both know an overwhelming majority of experts regard it as an essential component of climate policy and one that could be the difference between success and failure in managing emissions. And Labor is in a unique position right now – a landslide majority means now is the perfect time to push ambitious climate policy. Nonetheless, let's put this aside for a moment. What about the green energy transition – the administrative burden of current piecemeal policy is enormous?

MP: The transition from fossil fuels to clean energy is immensely complicated. There are literally thousands of elements to consider, which means various tailored policies is critical. Plus, there's the very real risk of leaving fossil fuel communities behind if we aren't careful. Suppose we placed a ban

on our fossil fuel exports after 2030, what would happen to the communities that rely on that trade for their wellbeing?

Lobbyist: We agree that fossil fuel communities mustn't be left behind. But don't the number of people vulnerable to climate change outnumber those reliant on the fossil fuel economy?

MP: Yes, but unfortunately, it's not that simple. You can't just deliberately jettison whole communities. Coal is going to be around for a long time. You only have to look at what's happening in Europe right now to see that the transition to renewables is slow and sometimes you have to fall back on old ways. Australia is a major fossil fuel exporter. We stand to lose much more than countries which import their energy. It will be a very delicate balancing act for us to maintain an equilibrium during this process and there will be plenty of tough decisions to make.

Lobbyist: We can certainly agree on that! But, the current Safeguard Mechanism, that aims to help incentivise businesses to decarbonise and invest in green energy themselves to help lower this burden of transition you mentioned, is instead disincentivising abatement and incentivising ineffective offsetting. Not to mention this offsetting is a carbon price, albeit a weak one: you purchase ACCUs to counteract your emissions. Why is there such a large gap between the emissions targets the government commits to, for example, under the Paris Agreement, and the actual policies they enact, when the evidence suggests current policies aren't strong enough to meet those targets?

MP: The safeguard mechanism is another thing that is under review in 2026-27, so it's a little premature for us to be discussing it. Right now, 200 of our most carbon intensive companies, companies like aluminium smelters, chemical manufacturers, steel manufacturers, power plants, etc., which are responsible for more than a quarter of our emissions, must meet an annually decreasing baseline. To answer your question, it's not like a comprehensive carbon price, but there is a cost to those who don't adhere to their targets.

Lobbyist: But this cost isn't working – it isn't a strong enough incentive to big fossil fuel companies. It isn't hurting their corporate profits – so they don't care. And the Mechanism *affects less than 30% of emissions* – in fact, if it were to affect all or most polluters, the administrative burden on the Clear Energy Regulator would be astronomical to the point it couldn't function. Would you like to hear about a mechanism that provides a competitive incentive for every single producer to decarbonise, and every single consumer as well?

MP: I sense a trap but go on.

Lobbyist: The APP does precisely that in a highly effective manner and it's extremely simple to implement and administer.

MP: Full marks for perseverance, but I don't think it's time has come.

Lobbyist: Well, I'm afraid we are going to keep banging on about it until its time has come and hopefully that won't be quite as far off as you imply. In the meantime, I hope we can meet on a regular basis to continue our conversation about climate policy.

MP: We certainly can.

References: Burfurd, I & Finighan, R 2026, Carbon pricing's second chance, Inflection Points, 21 June, viewed 15 July 2026, https://inflectionpoints.work/articles/carbon-pricings-second-chance.
Government Offices of Sweden 2018, Sweden's carbon tax, Government Offices of Sweden, Stockholm, viewed 15 July 2026, https://www.government.se/government-policy/taxes-and-tariffs/swedens-carbon-tax/.

Conducting a practice MP Meeting

This is something you can do in your local group. The idea is to conduct a group meeting in which one CCL member masquerades as a Labor MP and the other members play the part of the lobbyists. The group should firstly assign these roles to each other: MP; timekeeper; appreciator; asker(s).
Next, spend a little time planning your meeting. Review the notes outlined below and form an idea of what key questions you want to ask.

When you are ready, start the meeting with the 20 second formal introductions, the appreciation, checking how much time is available, and then firing off your opening question.

Here are some suggested questions:

- Are you familiar with CCL's preferred climate policy? (If yes, seek their opinion about it. If not, ask if you can explain it briefly).
- What is your personal view of the need for bipartisan and comprehensive climate policy?
- A question on Australia's position globally
  How will Australia fare if our major trading partners place carbon tariffs on our exports, and how can we respond to this?
- A question regarding election promises.
  According to the overwhelming majority of climate scientists, we need a much stronger target than the Government's 62-70% below 2005 levels by 2035 - is there a way the Government can embrace this without breaking its election promise?

De-briefing

This is the team meeting straight after the MP meeting to reflect on what happened. To improve your lobbying skills and maximise learning, reflecting on what went well and what could go better next time is critical. One way to do this is a "red light, green light" method where each team member says something that went well (green light) and something that was challenging, could be improved on or went a bit pear-shaped (red light), this way each team member has a chance to share their insights and you effectively balance the good and the not-so-good. Don't forget that politics can be messy and just like anything, practice makes perfect! And good on you for lobbying – we need more people like you in our democracy!