# Victorian Recreational Hunting of Waterfowl

## Guide to write to your local Member of Parliament

Contacting your local Member of Parliament is a great way to have your voice heard on the issues that you care about and why you think some decisions are better than others.

Our elected Members represent us in Parliament and are there to listen to the views and concerns of the public and their constituency. The more people who contact their Members, and better yet meet with them, on a certain issue the more likely it will be raised.

One of the simplest ways that you can engage with your Member and to have your voice heard is by writing them a letter. Handwritten letters hold even more weight and are more likely to receive a response from your Member.

We have created a quick guide, with tips and suggestions, for you to write to your local Member. Coupled with our ***How to Meet with your MP*** guide, the following guide will give you the tools to effectively engage with your local Member on the issues that you care about.

## How do I write?

You can find the contact information for your local Member (Federal and State) and how to contact them by following the below links:

**Parliament of Australia**
**Parliament of the Australian Capital Territory**
**Parliament of New South Wales**
**Parliament of the Northern Territory**
**Parliament of Queensland**
**Parliament of South Australia**
**Parliament of Tasmania**
**Parliament of Victoria**
**Parliament of Western Australia**

While it is most effective to contact your local Member, you could also consider contacting your representative in the Upper House of Parliament or the Minister whose portfolio relates to your concern (e.g. Minister for Environment, Minister for Planning, etc.).

## How do I address my local Member?

Make sure you use your Member of Parliament's correct title and contact details. You can find their details by following the respective links above.

In general, the following rules apply when addressing politicians:

**Local Members of Parliament**

Members should be addressed [Mr/Mrs/Dr/Ms] [First Name] [Last Name] [MP/MLA/MLC]. For example:

Mr Adam Bandt MP

Member for Melbourne

296 Brunswick Street

Fitzroy VIC 3065

*Salutation:* 'Dear [Sir/Madam]' or 'Dear [Mr/Mrs/Dr/Ms] [Last Name]'.

**Senators**

Senators should be addressed [Senator] [First Name] [Last Name]. For example:

Senator Carol Brown

Senator for Tasmania

GPO Box 376

Hobart TAS 7001

*Salutation:* 'Dear Senator'.

**Ministers**

Politicians who have been or are government Ministers will have the title 'The Honourable' prefixing their name and follow the same addressing conventions above. For example:

The Hon Sussan Ley MP

Minister for Environment

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

*Salutation:* 'Dear Minister'.

## What do I write?

### Introduce yourself and your issue

Your opening paragraph should be concise and straight to the point. Politicians receive hundreds of letters of correspondence and cannot read every word of every letter. Therefore, it is important that they know who you are, why you are writing and any request you are making from your opening.
Start your letter by telling your Member who you are (i.e. a local constituent or representative from a community group), why you are writing to them and what you are requesting (i.e. a meeting to discuss your issue further).

Example:

> *I am writing on behalf of BirdLife Southern Queensland to request a meeting to discuss our concerns on the effectiveness of Australia's national nature laws in conserving threatened birds and how we can work together to strengthen them.*

### Describe your issue and why is important to you

Include a short paragraph that describes why this issue is especially important to you, your local area, and any local work you do. Including facts will strengthen your argument and help get your point across in a more convincing manner. Make sure that you're concise and not vague.

Example:

> *It's clear that our current nature laws are failing the unique and threatened birdlife we have here, and we would like to seek your opinion and support on the solution. As local advocates working to improve the conservation status of Southern Queensland's threatened birds we are of the opinion that a new generation of nature laws, as mapped out by the Australian Panel of Experts on Environmental Law, presents a solution that offers implementable conservation measures that have a real chance at protecting our local natural wonders for future generations.*

**Tip:** add a personal touch. Personal anecdotes help ground the issue for your local Member. Your story coupled with facts will connect the head and heart of your local Member.

### Include any actions your local Member has already taken

Prior to writing, research your local Member's voting history, policies, media releases and public statements to see if they have taken any positive actions on your issue. If they have, be sure to thank them and present the case for further actions.

### Reiterate your specific ask

Bring your letter full circle by clearly reiterating the action you are asking your local Member to take.

Example actions:

- Support/oppose an upcoming bill that is related to your issue by voting for or against it.
- Raise the issue with the relevant Minister or Shadow Minister.
- Make a public statement or discuss the issue in a media release.
- Ask a question in Parliament.

### Conclude with your contact details

Thank your Member and conclude by providing your best contact details, email and telephone, and that you look forward to receiving their reply.

**Important tips:**

1. **Keep it brief.** Your letter should be no longer than one page, should concisely convey your message and should include a specific ask of your local Member. If you have a report or paper that backs up your claims include them as an attachment and reference the attachment in your letter.
2. **Time your request for the greatest impact.** Identify when your issue is likely to be discussed in Parliament, after it is mentioned in the media, or during an election cycle.
3. **Be firm but polite.** Local Members are people too! They are more likely to be receptive to a firm but polite letter.
4. **Follow up.** If you have not received a response after a few weeks call your local Member's office asking for an update on a response to your letter. Be both persistent and polite.

## Use our template here.