



queensland council of social service inc

WORKING FOR A FAIR QUEENSLAND

Introduction

Advocacy Kit

Paper 1

Dear member/stakeholder

Welcome to the **QCOSS Advocacy Kit**. It is designed to help you in two ways:

- To generally consider the skills and activities that help to make your advocacy effective.
- To provide you with specific information that may help you to support QCOSS's ongoing campaigns

QCOSS is structured as an organisation to reflect the following important outcomes that we work towards:

- Policy Advocacy
- Sector Development

QCOSS defines itself in this way because we think it is important to clarify when our work is towards a viable sector or when our advocacy aims to directly benefit disadvantaged people. After a lot of reflection among the staff and Board of QCOSS, we think it has been helpful to be clear with politicians and other key stakeholders what our focus is. We know the sector is crucial to the wellbeing of disadvantaged Queenslanders but we also want QCOSS to have a reputation for understanding how policy can directly benefit people and for strong and effective advocacy to that effect.

Our Budget Submission includes issues and recommendations relating to policy affecting disadvantaged people and recommendations affecting the viability and sustainability of the sector.

We invite members to participate in advocating the budget submission to their candidates and elected representatives at every possible opportunity. We also encourage members to consider clearly advocating the issues and solutions of direct benefit to disadvantaged people and build the reputation of the sector as focussed on improving the lives of people.

This kit includes the following components:

Paper 1	Introduction
Paper 2	Defining the issues
Paper 3	Defining objectives
Paper 4	Writing a letter to your MP
Paper 5	Meeting your MP
Paper 6	Media skills

We have also produced a policy series, including papers that summarise the key issues and recommendations in relation to each policy issue that QCOSS advocates (available at: www.qcross.org.au). This series is intended to help you to identify supportive evidence and clear solutions when we are talking to members of parliament and other key stakeholders. They provide information about Queensland overall and we encourage you to discuss how these issues impact in your community or region. Offer evidence of the problem in your community and tell stories about how the issue impacts on people.

The policy team at QCOSS is here to also provide assistance so please make contact if you have questions (policy@qcross.org.au or 07 3004 6900). The QCOSS website will also include regular updates with information and resources to help.



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**“Advocacy is the deliberate process of
influencing those who make policy decisions”
(ACOSS:2006)**

What is the problem?

A critical first step is to fully explore: What is the problem that you are trying to change or influence?

ACOSS has published some Worksheets to assist in designing a strategic advocacy campaign which are available on the QCOSS website:

[ACOSS_DesignStratAdvocacyCamp06.pdf](#)

The following questions are important to ask in the process of defining the problem as the basis of your campaign and are adapted from the ACOSS Worksheets. These questions are also intended to focus on policy issues for disadvantaged people rather than the issues for your specific organisation in terms of funding and viability.

1. What is the problem?
2. What is the evidence of the problem?
 - a. How do the availability of support data and other trends influence the group's thinking about the issues?
 - b. How achievable are the desired policy outcomes? How do the prospects of success affect participant's thinking about priority issues?
 - c. What overlap exists between the group's issues and the current issues?
 - d. If there is little or no "current" interest in any of the issues, what are the implications for the organisation in taking on that issue for policy advocacy?
 - e. Which policies/regulations/laws directly or indirectly affect the issue? Can they be changed?
 - f. Given all of the analysis and discussion carried out by the organisation, what one issue should the group select?
3. Do we work in the area?
4. What is the cause of the problem?
5. Are there any institutions that can bring about change?
6. Are there ways the community can bring about change?
7. Which organisations work on the issue, do coalition or community groups exist?

Acknowledgement to *ACOSS Designing a Strategic Advocacy Campaign Worksheets* available at: [ACOSS_DesignStratAdvocacyCamp06.pdf](#)



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Choosing an issue

Advocacy Kit

Paper 3

You might like to consider the following key questions when choosing an issue and refining the scope of your campaign:

1. Is the issue widely felt?
2. Do you have broad support?
3. Is it supported by sound data?
4. Is it easily understood?
5. Does it result in real improvement in people's lives?
6. Is it achievable?
7. Will you be able to build alliances with other groups?
8. Do you have clear time frames?
9. Can you build support at the grass roots?
10. Will it strengthen NGO linkages?
11. Is the issue consistent with your vision and missions?
12. Will it respond to community expressed needs?

[ACOSS_DesignStratAdvocacyCamp06.pdf](#)

ACOSS Worksheets 2006:6

“An advocacy goal is the long-term result (three to five years) of your advocacy effort. It is your vision for change. An advocacy objective is the short-term target that contributes towards your goal”.

Some important questions to ask in developing your objectives include:

1. Does qualitative and quantitative data exist to show that the objective will improve the situation?
2. Is the objective achievable? Even with opposition?
3. Will the objective gain the support of many people? Do people care about the objective deeply enough to take action?
4. Will you be able to raise money or other resources to support your work on the objective?
5. Can you clearly identify the target decision makers? What are their names and positions?
6. Is the objective easy to understand?

You may want to consider how QCOSS policy on various areas of disadvantage such as poverty, homelessness and housing – impacts on your community or region. This will allow you to set some objectives around specific topics and actions that are important in your area and that will have an impact with your local member or other candidates.

<p>Acknowledgement to <i>ACOSS Designing a Strategic Advocacy Campaign Worksheets</i> available at: ACOSS_DesignStratAdvocacyCamp06.pdf</p>



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Writing a letter to your MP

Advocacy Kit

Paper 4

Keep it short

A short letter, written succinctly, will have more impact than a long one outlining all issues in detail. Write only one or two pages. Be clear about what exactly the main issue is and draw attention to it at the beginning. Be focussed! Remember that politicians receive many letters on any given day. It helps to communicate the most information you can with the fewest words possible.

Use of salutation and address

Make sure that you use the correct salutation. Also ensure that the address and names are correct and are not misspelt. Ensure that your name and details are clear and bold. Contact details for all members of parliament are available at:

<http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/view/legislativeAssembly/members.asp?area=members&LIndex=1&Subarea=members>

Explain your organisation

In a brief paragraph explain your organisation's key mission or role in the community. If you think it will help, refer to your membership and to the extent that the community uses your services.

Be positive

Encourage your MP to take up this issue and help bring about the change required. Explain the benefits for the MP and his/her electorate. Be clear on the issue and its importance.

Establish yourself as a resource

Let your MP know that you are well versed with issue and should they require more information that you are able to provide it to them. Also explain why the issue is important to you and your community. Refer to research, statistics and other evidence if you can and be prepared to provide copies if asked.

Call for action

Ask the MP for a reply and an interview. Ask them to act upon the issue in their capacity of elected representative and member of the community. Ask for a commitment to explore this issue.

Who should sign? Using the power of your Board.

If you are writing from a community organisation, it is important to reflect on who is the most appropriate person to sign the letter. If you are taking a position on government policy or advocating for an issue to be changed, it helps to have the president or secretary of the Board sign the letter. This shows more clearly that this is an issue the Board is aware of, has discussed and wants to change.

Remember that your Board is elected from an association of members – many of these members will be residents in a local community or region. They vote for the Board and they vote in general elections for local, State and Federal members. The views of the Board indicate what some members of the community believe to be important. Use the power of your association, the mandate from your membership and the fact that your Board is also elected. The same is true when considering a delegation to visit an MP. Always think carefully about who should be involved in a delegation and include your Board members. They can play the role of chair of the delegation and should always have a speaking role. A worker can help by preparing briefing notes and any other information that can help. More on delegations in Paper 5!



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Meeting your MP

Advocacy Kit

Paper 5

Arranging a meeting

Phone their office or call in to arrange an interview. Ask how much time you will have for the meeting. Ask who will be at the meeting – sometimes an MP will bring staff such as policy advisers and these people can become a contact for follow up. Once the meeting has been arranged, write an email confirming the details, confirming who will be attending with you and summarising the agenda.

Be prepared

Prepare some background information on the issue if you can. Provide a succinct one page summary if possible with contact details for future reference. If you are asked a question and you don't have the answer offer to follow up.

Your group should meet beforehand to decide who will speak. Agree on some notes and keep to the script. Decide on who will chair your delegation. This person should keep things moving and keep time!

Don't be late

Make sure you are early and prepared when you arrive. Remember the allocated time and be as succinct as possible within that timeframe. Even if an MP is late, they may still have to leave at the nominated finishing time because of other commitments. Remember to focus on the one or two most important things to say and all agree to focus on these. It is even helpful to conduct any presentations in less than the allocated time in case they need to leave early. Make sure you are aware of the parking arrangements so that you won't be late for the meeting.

Suggested outline for your meeting

1. Introduce yourself & your team members
2. Reiterate the purpose of the visit
3. Ask what they are wanting from the visit
4. State problem and move to recommendations
5. Discuss ways in which you can help them – i.e. provide further information or put them in contact with QCOSS
6. Restate recommendations
7. Follow up – write and phone thanking for the visit

Talking from the heart

Politicians want to hear your experiences and the experiences of people you know. Facts and figures are useful but personal stories are powerful. Don't be an

expert in everything. If you can't answer something say you'll find out and get back to them.

Keep in mind the big picture

Politicians always get people asking for money for specific enterprises. It's important to avoid this. Don't focus on your organisation's problems. Push the larger agenda of what is needed to end poverty and inequality in Queensland. Helping the sector overall will have long term benefits for your organisation.

Prepare 2 or 3 key messages

Before you meet, write down two or three stories you want to tell them. Also write down two or three key messages you want them to hear and remember. Be clear and focussed about why you are meeting with the MP. Ask them for a commitment.

Build a relationship with your MP

Getting to know your politician means they're more likely to listen. They don't like people simply criticising them or their party. Listen to what they are saying and answer their questions clearly. You'll be most influential by developing a relationship. If an MP talks about an issue or consideration, give some thought to how this issue might be dealt with and offer solutions. Invite them to your organisation. Ask them to attend or have an official role at a special event.

My MP is not part of the party in power

Opposition and independent MPs influence government. Informing them of our needs will help.

Election lobbying

- This is a key time to put the issue on the agenda. The next QLD state election will be looming soon!
- Approach all candidates. By approaching all candidates you let them know that this issue is important in the community and that the community is concerned about their position.
- Ask them what their position is and what actions they would undertake if elected.
- Let them know that you are approaching all candidates for their positions and will ensure your community and the media are informed of their responses.

Get Help

Don't go it alone. Take people with you for support. And don't hesitate to contact QCOSS for ideas and information. Call QCOSS on 07 3004 6900 or visit www.qcoss.org.au.



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The media is a critical resource in any campaign. Broad media exposure allows you to achieve a higher level of public awareness and also communicates the issues to elected representatives.

When working with the media it is helpful to consider the following:

1. Define your issue and research evidence that you can use in media releases and interviews.
2. Prepare a media contact sheet as a reference: include key contact names and phone/email/fax details.
3. Think about which media outlets are most likely to be interested in your issue
4. Develop a media policy for your organisation and clearly identify who are the official spokespersons. This is usually the president and the most senior worker in the organisation unless otherwise delegated.
5. Develop a media kit about your organisation and your issues. You can distribute this proactively and it can also be useful in a responsive campaign. Use this to build a profile for your organisation as a place journalists can turn to for good information and comment.
6. Proactively build relationships with key contacts: find out if journalists look after any key portfolio areas and provide them with information.
7. Watch the media closely (print, radio, TV) to see how issues are portrayed and identify examples of where you think people have communicated their issue effectively. Practice saying what the key issues and solutions are in 10 seconds!!
8. Develop some core media releases about your organisation and issue as a baseline. Look at examples of media releases and define a clear structure. It is better if they are no more than one page and include the most important information first. Include direct quotes that journalists can use in total if they wish. Make sure you include accessible contact numbers (preferably mobile phones). Do everything possible to ensure that someone can be contacted for clarification or at best, return people's calls promptly. Journalists are often working to tight deadlines and need information quickly. You want them to also know you can be relied upon.
9. Consider developing an event that will attract the media. Think about location in terms of what it communicates to the broader public but also in terms of whether it is easily accessible for reporters. Provide clear information to the media in a release about the event including location, activities and contacts.
10. Consider the ethical issues that can emerge in dealing with the media. If you are working directly with constituents or clients, consider any risks related to confidentiality and privacy or their wellbeing overall.
11. Be clear with media if you are saying something off the record. Be cognizant of your responsibilities in relation to various laws relating to defamation for example.
12. Follow up with reports after media exposure on your issue. Thank them for their assistance and point out the strong points about how the issue was portrayed.
13. Keep a record of media coverage on your issues and reflect on any possible improvements for the future.
14. To read examples of media releases go to: <http://www.qcross.org.au/>