

A guide to meeting your local MP



For many of us meeting with our local Member of Parliament (MP) can seem like a daunting process. However, that person is in Parliament talking on your behalf so you have every right to share your views and have those presented in Wellington.

Meeting with your local MP is a clear indication that you feel strongly about an issue, and it's a good way to assess the MP's views on marine matters, and recreational fishing in particular.

It is important to make a good impression. Polite persistence is the best strategy, taking into account that your MP may have little or no idea about fisheries management. If they have done any preparation it is likely they will give you the party line, or the standard response from Ministry for Primary Industries officials - 'everything is good, we have a "world leading quota system", no worries'.



Who is your local MP?

Find out who your MP is and what electorate you are in [here](#).

When and where to meet your MP

MPs usually have regular visiting times at their local office. A call to the electorate office will help secure an appointment time.

Alternatively, a meeting in Wellington can be arranged but could be more difficult to find a suitable slot that fits with their Parliamentary duties. A call or email to the Wellington MP's office will be required.

Why is it important to visit your MP?

It is important to register your concern with your MP so they can influence the development of party policy before it's settled, and prior to an election. Many issues are determined by party policy and MPs are mostly required to vote along party lines. Once a party's policy is set there are few politicians who will step outside those lines.

However, visiting your MP is still worth doing to let them know you feel strongly about an issue.

The more people who express their concerns, the greater the chances marine fisheries and environmental issues won't be ignored.

On rare occasions, and usually on contentious topics, a conscience vote is called in Parliament, enabling each MP to vote independently of their party.

What to do prior to visiting your MP?

Prepare well. It is good to be familiar with the issues you want to discuss and take along some examples to support your arguments. You don't need to be an expert, just being passionate enough to talk about the issues will impress the MP.

Talking to other fishers in your locality who share your concerns is a good strategy as you can become united in your voice and efforts. Going in pairs and developing an ongoing conversation can help drive home the message.

Many of the key points LegaSea has been promoting can be found on our website at: www.legasea.co.nz and you can always call us on 0800 LEGASEA (534 273) if you have a particular issue you wish to address with your MP.

Visiting your MP

Earbashing does not work. Be prepared to have a good conversation. Be fair and listen to their reasons for agreeing, or not agreeing, with you. You are more likely to sway their opinion if you are knowledgeable, reasonable, and passionate.

Remember, the MP is most likely less informed than you about your issue so make it easy for them to understand why the issue is important to you, your family and how their actions will influence your future decisions.

Don't beat around the bush. Tell your MP up front your opinion and what you think they ought to do about it –

Example: My fishing is not what it used to be. I ask that you publicly endorse preference needs to be given to recreational fishing if there is not enough fish to share amongst non-commercial and commercial fishing.

Briefly state your argument as to why you think they ought to do what you ask –

Example 1: In 1989 the Government recognised that recreational fishing was important and developed a recreational fishing policy. Fishing is a big part of who we are as New Zealanders. Fishing provides fresh food for families, a sharing time amongst friends, and builds unity in the community.

Example 2: Recreational fishing is worth almost a billion to the New Zealand economy. There is potential for the New Zealand economy to benefit much more from recreational fishing if we had more abundant fisheries. Healthier fisheries means more chance of success when fishing. Word would soon spread in New Zealand and overseas that our fishing is the best, drawing in overseas dollars and helping our regions to grow.

Make some specific policy statements –

Example 1: I ask that you publicly endorse [Moyle's Promise](#) and have your party give effect to its intent so we can go fishing and have a reasonable chance of success for a day's fishing effort.

Example 2: The abundance of fish inshore needs to be restored. Policies that will provide for a rebuild of fish abundance need to be implemented. That means setting more conservative catch levels, particularly for inshore stocks.

Example 3: Bulk harvesting commercial methods such as trawling, Danish seining and dredging are wasteful methods that kill indiscriminately and produce low value product and

poor export returns. These bulk harvesting methods need to be shifted offshore, out past the 12 nautical mile limit.



Example 4: Within the territorial sea, inside 12 nautical miles, the economy and value generated from non-commercial fishing dwarfs that of commercial use. There is a huge upside to New Zealand economy by promoting high value tourism, without the need to kill any more fish. Why would a government enable commercial exploitation so high that it prevents high value use from occurring?

Try to get a clear commitment from your MP, even if it is just to meet you again in the coming months to discuss the issue further. That way they know you are committed and will hold them to account.

Your MP works for you so feel free to give them a task and a deadline.

Example: I would like you to find out why the Ministry for Primary Industries chose to give the contract to monitor cameras aboard trawlers in Snapper 1 to the industry instead of to an independent third party.”

After the visit with your MP

If you didn't convince your MP, that's okay. Most MPs will stick to the party line in public and it may feel like you have failed. You haven't. You have planted the seed and made it clear there are strong feelings, and solutions, in the community about marine matters, environmental issues, and recreational fishing specifically.

Write or email to thank the MP for their time to meet with you. Outline what you discussed and specifically mention any promises they made. Remind them that you are expecting an answer from them on any questions you've asked. Set up your next meeting, whether it's with the same MP or another.

Don't forget, we have Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) representation, so there will be list MPs in your area worth meeting, particularly if they are high up in the party ranks or have a relevant portfolio.

MP information pack

In February 2017 LegaSea sent every MP an information pack. If you would like to receive a pack please contact us and we will send you that information.

Key contacts:

LegaSea

W: <https://www.legasea.co.nz>

E: info@legasea.co.nz

P: 0800 LEGASEA (534 273)

MP and electorates:

<http://www.elections.org.nz/voters/find-my-electorate>



Big thanks to [Greenpeace](#) for sharing some of this information with LegaSea so you can be better prepared when meeting your MP.