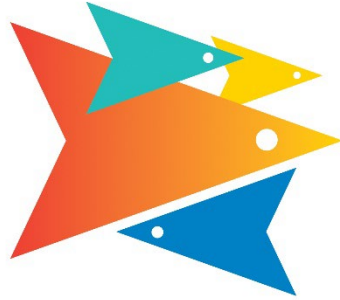


Contacting your local politician



recfishwest

As the recognised peak body for recreational fishing, Recfishwest works hard to ensure great fishing experiences for the more than 750,000 Western Australian fishers and inject \$2.4 billion annually into the WA economy. Our door is always open, and we work hard to stay abreast of recreational fishing issues and represent the interests of recreational fishing in WA.

Many recreational fishers have told us they would like to contact their local Member of Parliament (MP) to discuss recreational fishing issues of concern noting direct communication with local elected representative can often achieve positive and timely outcomes.

Recfishwest is apolitical and does not advocate for any political party or individual politician - we will always support people exercising their democratic rights by contacting their local MP to discuss matters of concern.

If you choose to contact your local MP, Recfishwest has put together the following advice to help you achieve positive outcomes.

- 1. Find your local MP**
- 2. Choose the right form of contact**
- 3. Remember the 5 Ps**
- 4. Keep a record and follow up**

Contacting your local politician

1. Find your local MP

If you are unsure what electorate you belong to, you can type your postcode into the [Find Your Electorate](#) page on the WA Electoral commission website.

State

It is likely your topic of concern should be discussed with your State MP as recreational fishing is a State responsibility governed by State legislation. This is which is why different States have different fishing rules, licences, bag limits and fishing seasons.

You can find out who your State MP is from the [WA Parliament member page](#) by searching member surname, electorate, postcode, suburb or region. The name of your local MP will appear and clicking on this name will bring up their contact details.

If you want to discuss a particular topic rather than a local issue, search for the relevant [Minister or Parliamentary Secretary](#).

Federal

Some issues are the responsibility of your Federal MP, including Commonwealth marine parks, defence, Commonwealth fisheries, international treaties, and national environmental policies.

You can find out who your Federal MP is from the [Australian Electoral Commission website](#) - search your suburb, electorate or postcode.

Once you know who your Federal MP, is go to the [list of Senators and members for Western Australia](#) and click on their name which will bring up all their contact details.

Contacting your local politician

2. Choose the right form of contact

While most politicians have a Facebook page, this is not the best way to contact them. Politicians have advisors and staff managing their social media pages, so there is no guarantee a comment on a politician's page will actually reach them or that a reply from their page was written by your local MP.

If you really want to have your message heard, look beyond social media and establish direct connection through a face-to-face meeting, phone call, email or letter.

Face-to-face

A face-to-face meeting is the best way to connect with your local MP. As your local representative, you have a right to expect your local MP will meet with their constituents.

Politicians have busy schedules - it is unlikely you'll get a face-to-face meeting as soon as you walk into their office. A phone call, letter or email requesting a meeting is likely to get faster results.

Phone

Ringling a politician's office and speaking with their staff can often be the quickest way to organise a meeting with your MP.

Phone calls are generally shorter than face-to-face meetings so before calling make sure you have prepared and know what you want to say- see sections 3 and 4.

Email or letter

If phoning or meeting with your local politician is too daunting, you can send them an email or write them a letter. If you send correspondence, you are likely to get some correspondence back although often it is only a proforma letter thanking you for contacting them. If you send a letter or email as part of a larger campaign, any response is likely to be a generic reply that simply notes your correspondence.

Before emailing or writing a letter make sure you have prepared and know what you want to say – see sections 3 and 4.

3. Remember the 5 Ps

It is likely you will only have 30 minutes or less when meeting your local politician, or only a few minutes if calling over the phone, so use the time wisely. Remember the five Ps (Punctual Polite, Personable, Prepared, and Precise).

Punctual

Be sure to arrive ahead of time – politicians have busy daily schedules. If you have background material, it can be useful to send it to the politician's office prior to the meeting so they can acquaint themselves with the issue. However, do not expect them to read through mountains of paperwork.

Polite

Contacting your local politician

Politicians are normal community members like you who have been elected to represent their local community. They are mums, dads, business owners and public servants who are stepping up to do a job many of us wouldn't want to do.

Present your case, be polite and be respectful. Quite often, they will be unaware of your issue or have only heard another side of the argument.

Personable

While issues such as unfair fishing restrictions, expansion of no fishing areas, inequitable resource sharing, developments impacting your favourite fishing spot or the number of fish being eaten by sharks might be incredibly important to you, not every politician will understand, be aware of or even share your concerns. To attract people to your cause your message needs to appeal to them. Take them on the journey with you from the very beginning.

There is a greater chance a politician will take note of your concern if you can share a common value. Talking about how an issue directly impacts on you and why the issue is so important to you is more effective than talking about how an issue impacts society. The more you know about your local politician the greater the chance you can find something you both have in common especially as you are both members of the same local community.

You can visit the parliament websites and search Hansard which is a record of what has been said in parliament to see if your issue has been raised previously or if your local member has previously spoken on this issue.

- [Hansard State](#)
- [Hansard Commonwealth](#)

A simple internet search using Google to find out if your MP has spoken previously on relevant issues can provide invaluable insight into whether your local member is likely to be aware of or share your concerns. Many MP'S also have their own websites or e-newsletters with back issues available for reading which can provide valuable insights into their views.

Prepared

Most MPs want to be helpful to their constituents, but you will need to help them help you. Before contacting your local politician make sure you know as much as you can about your issue and can articulate how this issue affects you. It is a good idea to write a one-page summary to help guide your conversation and keep you on track. If emailing your local politician this summary can form the basis of your email.

Clearly state your issue of concern explain why this issue is important to you, how it affects you and why it should be important to them.

In addition to knowing what level to pitch your conversation, keep note of how receptive your local MP is to the points you raise as this will indicate their understand and level of interest. It will also help you to respond to any questions or misconceptions they may have.

You should also ask your local member of parliament for advice on who else you should contact about the issue and what they consider would be helpful in achieving your objectives. If your local MP refers you to another politician with greater ability to respond to your needs, ask them as a member of their electorate, for continuing involvement and support on this issue.

Contacting your local politician

Even if your member of parliament does not support your position, being asked to explain their differing view can provide valuable insights into their values and their thinking.

Precise

In talking to your local politician, it is important to be accurate. Providing information that can't be verified or that has been embellished won't be considered helpful or reliable. Be clear and to the point in requesting what you would like your local member of parliament to do and try to demonstrate why taking such action would benefit others in their electorate.

What your MP will be able to do will vary depending on whether they are a member of the government (or opposition or minor party), whether they are a State or Federal MP, whether they hold a ministerial portfolio, are a parliamentary secretary, or member of a relevant committee. All politicians can table a petition, raise an issue with their party, table a grievance or make further enquiries but some politicians can do much more including shape government policy or reverse decisions.

- Demonstrating that there is electoral support for your cause is important. The more you can show others in your community share your concerns the more likely they'll take a strong interest in the issue. Think of other benefits that you may be able to point to, e.g.: the opportunity for positive local media coverage, increased profile within the electorate, reaching a section of the community often overlooked etc.
- Once you've signalled what you are asking for, you may seek a commitment from your local member of parliament and ask them what action they will take following your visit and when they intend to take this action. If possible, you may need to help them by suggesting a practical solution if possible and providing clear and specific actions you expect them to take.

It is important to be clear about the outcomes of your meeting so leave a few minutes for questions to make sure your local member of parliament really understand the issues you are talking about as well as your expectations or them.

4. Keep records

Make notes of everything that both you and your local member of parliament said and committed to doing. Send a follow-up up email summarising the outcome of the meeting and asking them to confirm the outcomes.

Relay the outcome of your meeting with other community members who share your concerns and encourage them to also contact their local MP.

Good luck and make sure you encourage others to do what you are doing. Ten people walking through the door of a politician's office and talking directly with them is often more effective than a petition with 1,000 signatures.