

Advocating to Government

Politicians have the power to make decisions and laws on our behalf. So no matter what level of government you may be advocating to, it's important to have a basic understanding of our system of government in Australia. Below is an overview of federal, state and local government contacts and bodies, with some helpful links to more information.

[Who's Who in the Cancer World](#) | [Finding out about your issue](#) | [Working with Government](#)

WHO'S WHO IN THE CANCER WORLD

Federal Government

- [Federal Department of Health and Ageing](#)
- Minister for Health – [The Hon. Greg Hunt](#)
- [Cancer Australia](#) – A national government agency working to reduce the impact of cancer. They provide advice to government on cancer control and care.
- [Australian Government Directory](#)

NSW State Government

- [NSW Health](#)
- Minister for Health – [The Hon. Brad Hazzard](#)
- [NSW Government Directory](#)

Local Health Districts

Each [Local Health District](#) is led by a Chief Executive and a Health District Board and provides local health services.

Cancer Institute NSW

The [Cancer Institute NSW](#) is a statutory body set up to improve cancer outcomes in NSW.

- Chief Cancer Officer and CEO: [Professor David Currow](#)
- [The NSW Cancer Plan](#)
- [Cancer Referral Network](#)

Cancer Voices NSW

[Cancer Voices NSW](#) provides an independent voice to government on behalf of people affected by cancer and is the peak coalition for NSW cancer consumer groups. Cancer Voices NSW also collaborates with Cancer Council NSW on Advocacy Training and Consumer Research Training.

Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of New South Wales (AH&MRC of NSW)

The [AH&MRC of NSW](#) is the peak representative body and voice of Aboriginal communities on health in NSW. They represent their members, the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHSs) that deliver culturally appropriate, comprehensive primary health care to communities.

Contacting MPs and Ministers

- [Federal MPs, Ministers and Shadow Ministers](#)
- [NSW State MPs, Ministers and Shadow Ministers](#)

Finding your electorate

To find your state electorate visit the [NSW Electoral Commission](#) website. To find your federal electorate, visit the [Australian Electoral Commission](#) website.

FINDING OUT ABOUT YOUR ISSUE

The [Parliament of Australia](#) and [Parliament of NSW](#) websites contain a wealth of useful information for our advocacy. Both websites have a section on Hansard (that can be accessed from the homepage of each site) which is the official record of the proceedings of parliament. You can search on *Hansard* to find out if anyone has been talking about your issue in parliament.

Access to information

Our federal and state governments have passed laws that give us access to information held by governments. This can sometimes be very useful when we are running advocacy campaigns. The 'Freedom of Information' (FOI) laws were passed in the 1980s to try to open up government to the people. These laws were passed by both the Australian and New South Wales governments. This means we can seek access to documents held by Federal, NSW and local government authorities in NSW. For example, Cancer Council NSW has previously obtained information from the NSW government about tobacco retailers who are listed on the government's register to use for a tobacco control campaign.

The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act) came into force on 1 July 2010, replacing the Freedom of Information Act 1989 in NSW. [The NSW Office of the Information Commissioner](#) is an independent body that has been established to promote public awareness and understanding of the new system, and provide advice, assistance and training to government agencies and the public.

At the Federal level, the [Office of the Australian Information Commissioner](#), supported by the FOI Commissioner, acts as an independent monitor of FOI matters and reviews FOI access decisions made by agencies and ministers.

Keep an eye on the media

As an advocate, it's very important to keep up-to-date with media so you know if your issue is receiving coverage. Governments also use the media to let us know what they are doing. For example, public consultations and inquiries are often advertised in the metropolitan newspapers, such as [The Sydney Morning Herald](#).

WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT

Petitions

Petitions can be a great way of gathering and demonstrating public support for an issue. It can also be a way of engaging the interest of the media. The Coalition Government in NSW has promised that the subject matter of a petition which has been signed by 10,000 or more people will be set down for discussion by the Legislative Assembly as a 'matter of public importance'. Only petitions received in a [particular format](#) will be accepted by the NSW Parliament (this is also true of the Federal Parliament but they sometimes will accept petitions that are not in the set form).

Formal petitions to parliament are different from internet petitions that may circulate on social media or through websites such as [change.org](https://www.change.org/) or [CommunityRun](https://www.communityrun.org.au/). These two websites in particular are online platforms for people create change by providing the tools to run a campaign.

Question Time

Each day parliament sits, time is set aside for questions to be asked of ministers. Government, opposition and cross bench members take turns, but it is often dominated by the Leader of the Opposition. It's a good way of seeking information and exposing problems, and often focuses on what's in the media that day. You can approach non-government MPs to ask questions of ministers in this way.

Questions on Notice

These are written questions signed by MPs, and requiring a response from a minister. They are particularly useful for seeking information about an issue. Answers must be provided within 35 days. Again, you can approach an MP to write a question on your behalf. They may even appreciate your help in framing the question.

Parliamentary committees and inquiries

Parliamentary committees exist in both federal and state parliaments and are made up of members of parliament appointed to assist the parliament in its work. Committees increase public awareness and debate on issues under consideration by parliament. They benefit the community by reviewing proposed laws, facilitating more informed policy-making and ensuring greater government accountability.

Committees can call for written submissions, conduct hearings where witnesses give evidence and seek advice from experts. They provide a forum for the public to have their say on issues before the Parliament. Committees report their findings and recommendations for government action to the Parliament. You can lobby committee members to initiate inquiries and focus on certain issues or points of view during the inquiry.

A full list of parliamentary committees and inquiries is available on the [Parliament of NSW](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/) and [Parliament of Australia websites](https://www.parliament.gov.au/).

Community Cabinet

These meetings are an opportunity for individuals and community groups to meet face to face with government ministers and to have their say on issues affecting their region. Upcoming Community Cabinet meetings are listed on the [NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet](https://www.nsw.gov.au/premier-and-cabinet) and [Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet](https://www.pmc.gov.au/) websites.

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