GovConnex

# Writing to MPs: The Essential Checklist

A practical guide to writing political correspondence that is clear, relevant and easy to act on.

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Political offices process a constant flow of correspondence. Most letters are first read, classified and routed by staff. By the time an MP sees a letter, the office may already have decided what it means, who owns it and how it should be answered.

That first interpretation matters. A letter with a clear request can move quickly to the person able to act on it. A letter that buries its purpose, combines several requests or appears generic is harder to route and easier to defer.

During my time staffing, I dealt with thousands of pieces of incoming and outgoing correspondence and I was consistently surprised by letters from experienced business leaders that contained no clear request or used incorrect names, titles and other basic details.

This guide distils the most durable lessons from that experience into six checks to complete before sending.

## Who this guide is for

This guide is for organisations writing to elected parliamentarians across Australia: members of lower houses, members of upper houses and senators, whether they are backbenchers, ministers or shadow ministers. For simplicity, it uses “MP” as an umbrella term throughout.

It is designed for business-to-MP correspondence. It is not a guide to constituent casework or grassroots community campaigns, which require different approaches.

## The case study used throughout

Every good and bad example in this guide is drawn verbatim from the same two letters reproduced in full at the end. Both concern a fictional proposal to harmonise public-holiday dates across Australia. The addressee and public parliamentary details are real; the organisation, survey and figures are fictional and exist only to demonstrate effective and ineffective correspondence.

# The pre-send checklist

1 Is the covering letter no more than one page?

2 Does the letter make one clear request?

3 Does the first paragraph state the conclusion?

4 Is the case tailored to this MP?

5 Is there one clear primary recipient?

6 Have you verified every name, title, honorific and address?

# 1 Is the covering letter no more than one page?

### WHY?

A political letter is not a submission. Its purpose is to make the request, establish why it matters and give the office enough information to decide what happens next.

As a rule, keep the covering letter to one page. If the central request cannot be understood within that space, it is probably not yet clear enough. Complex evidence, technical analysis and formal submissions can sit in attachments, but staff should not need to open them to understand what you want.

### ADVICE

- Treat one page as a constraint on thinking, not an invitation to shrink the font.
- Use short paragraphs and generous white space.
- Include only the strongest evidence needed to justify the request.
- Put supporting detail in a clearly labelled attachment.
- Make sure the covering letter still stands alone.

### GOOD LETTER EXCERPT

> I am writing to request a meeting to discuss the case for harmonising public-holiday dates across Australia and the impact current inconsistencies have on businesses in Chifley.
>
> In our June 2026 member survey, 18 businesses in Chifley reported paying additional wages or losing a trading day when one state observed a public holiday and the other did not. Together, businesses in your electorate estimated the additional cost in 2025 at $418,000.

The request and strongest evidence appear in two short paragraphs. The complete letter fits comfortably on one page.

### BAD LETTER EXCERPT

> The Council's work has expanded considerably during the past decade. We now produce quarterly updates, convene an annual conference…

The letter spends its limited attention on organisational history before it reaches the issue. The complete letter runs for more than one page and makes the MP work to discover its purpose.

# 2 Does the letter make one clear request?

### WHY?

Every request creates an action for someone inside an office. A meeting request may go to an executive assistant. A policy request may require advice from a portfolio staffer or referral to a department. An invitation may sit with events staff. Put all three in one letter and responsibility becomes unclear.

The office may answer the easiest request, divide the letter between several people or assume another office is handling it. One primary request gives the correspondence one clear owner.

A request can contain necessary detail (a meeting length, preferred timing and subject) without becoming several requests. The test is whether the MP's staff member reading the correspondence can express the required next action in one sentence.

### ADVICE

- Use one letter for one primary action.
- Make the request specific enough to action.
- Separate unrelated requests into separate correspondence, or hold them back altogether.
- Do not use one letter as a laundry list of grievances.

### GOOD LETTER EXCERPT

> I am writing to request a meeting to discuss the case for harmonising public-holiday dates across Australia and the impact current inconsistencies have on businesses in Chifley.

The required action is unambiguous: arrange one meeting about one issue.

### BAD LETTER EXCERPT

> We therefore ask you to meet with us to discuss this, and request that you support the establishment of a National Cabinet review, write to the Premier and the relevant ministers, meet with a delegation of our members, visit our Albury distribution centre and deliver the keynote address at our annual conference in November.

The letter asks the MP to arrange two meetings, endorse a review, write to other office-holders, visit a site and deliver a speech. Those actions would be handled by different people.

# 3 Does the first paragraph state the conclusion?

**WHY?**

The Minto Pyramid Principle gives business writing a top-down structure: the governing message first, the reasons beneath it and the supporting evidence below those reasons.

In a request letter, the conclusion is the action you want the reader to take. In the good letter, that conclusion is the request for a meeting about harmonising public-holiday dates and their effect on Chifley businesses. The material beneath it explains why that meeting is worth the MP's time.

If your real request is for the MP to publicly support a policy, write to a minister or raise a matter in Parliament, state that action instead.

## The Minto structure applied to the good letter

Conclusion: Meet with us to discuss harmonising public-holiday dates and the effect on businesses in Chifley.

Reasons the meeting is warranted:

- The issue is imposing a measurable cost on businesses in the MP's electorate.
- The organisation has specific Chifley evidence rather than a generic national complaint.
- The organisation can provide the underlying data and a practical proposal for greater coordination.

Supporting evidence: 18 Chifley businesses reported a direct impact and estimated an additional combined cost of $418,000 in 2025.

Each level supports the one above it. The figures demonstrate local significance; the local significance justifies the briefing; the briefing supports the meeting request.

### ADVICE

- Put the request in the first paragraph, preferably the first sentence.
- Follow it with up to three reasons the MP should agree, but one reason can be enough.
- Put the strongest evidence directly beneath those reasons.
- Keep organisational history to one sentence, if it is needed at all.

### GOOD LETTER EXCERPT

> I am writing to request a meeting to discuss the case for harmonising public-holiday dates across Australia and the impact current inconsistencies have on businesses in Chifley.

A reader who stops after the first sentence still knows the requested action, issue and local relevance.

### BAD LETTER EXCERPT

> By way of background, the Australian Cross-Border Business Council was established in 1998 following discussions between businesses operating across state and territory borders.

The letter begins with corporate history. The MP still does not know what is being requested.

# 4 Is the case tailored to this MP?

**WHY?**

Every political office asks some version of the same question: why has this been sent to us?

The answer depends on the recipient. A local member will look for effects on constituents and the electorate. A minister or shadow minister who is also an MP will consider portfolio relevance. A senator or other upper-house member may be relevant because of committee work, party responsibilities or a public record on the issue.

If the same letter could be sent unchanged to every member of Parliament, it is not genuinely addressed to any of them.

> From experience: a letter sent to the NSW Premier's office cited figures for the federal electorate of Wentworth rather than the Premier's state electorate. The supposedly local evidence was therefore irrelevant to the recipient. If you have addresses or postcodes but not electorate data, GovConnex can map them to state and federal electorates.

**ADVICE**

- For a local MP, identify your people, employers, facilities or services in their electorate.
- For a minister or shadow minister, connect the issue to their portfolio and the decision they can influence.
- For a senator or upper-house member, connect it to their committee responsibilities, party role (especially if they are a patron to an electorate) or public record.
- Prefer one credible, relevant local fact over a generic national claim.
- If no genuine local connection exists, explain the recipient's genuine institutional or political relevance.

### GOOD LETTER EXCERPT

> In our June 2026 member survey, 18 businesses in Chifley reported paying additional wages or losing a trading day when one state observed a public holiday and the other did not. Together, businesses in your electorate estimated the additional cost in 2025 at $418,000.

The evidence gives the Member for Chifley a clear reason to engage. It is specific, measurable and connected to his electorate.

### BAD LETTER EXCERPT

> Public holidays are not observed consistently across Australia. This creates unnecessary complexity for businesses and reduces national productivity. Members in every state and territory have told us the current arrangements are confusing, inefficient and increasingly difficult to administer.

The claim may be relevant nationally, but it gives this MP no particular reason to prioritise the letter.

# 5 Is there one clear primary recipient?

### WHY?

Political correspondence needs an owner. Copying a large group of MPs, ministers, departments and political offices can signal that the sender has not identified who should act.

Copy another office only when it has a clear role in progressing the same request.

If several MPs need to be engaged, send separate tailored letters. That creates clear ownership and allows the evidence and relevance to change for each recipient.

> From experience: an electorate office received one letter addressed jointly to two MPs in neighbouring electorates, with the Premier copied. No office could tell who was expected to act, so staff first had to call one another to establish ownership. Some simply assumed the most senior recipient would handle it.

### ADVICE

- Address the letter to the person best placed to take the requested action.
- Use the To line to establish ownership.
- Copy a local member, relevant minister or other office only where their involvement has a defined purpose.
- Do not copy the Premier, Prime Minister or an entire Cabinet merely “for visibility”.
- For a broader campaign, use individual letters rather than one wide distribution list.

### GOOD LETTER EXCERPT

> The Hon. Ed Husic MP
> Member for Chifley
> Via: ed.husic.mp@aph.gov.au

There is one addressee and one office responsible for deciding whether to arrange the meeting.

### BAD LETTER EXCERPT

> CC: the Minister for Industrial Relations; the Minister for Tourism

The copy line gives three political offices the same correspondence without explaining which one owns the request or why the other two are involved.

# PAUSE BEFORE SENDING

The final check should happen after the letter is complete and immediately before it leaves your organisation. Open GovConnex to see their current official parliamentary profile. Check each field deliberately. If authoritative sources conflict, call their office.

# 6 Have you verified every name, title, honorific and address?

**WHY?**

Incorrect details damage credibility before the office reaches the substance of the letter. A misspelled surname, obsolete portfolio or incorrect salutation tells the reader that the correspondence may be generic or thoughtless.

The correct form varies by chamber, office and jurisdiction. Not every MP is “The Hon.”; members and senators use different titles and postnominals; portfolios, committee roles and parliamentary offices change.

The point is not to memorise every convention. It is to verify the details from a current source every time.

> From experience: when I worked for NSW Health Minister Jillian Skinner, letters arrived almost daily with her first name misspelled or her ministerial title wrong. Such slips are understandable from a distressed constituent, but we would regularly see them from established health providers.

> TIP: If you are not sure, call their office and confirm the correct salutation. The person you speak to is likely in the team handling the correspondence.

**VERIFY:**

- The spelling of the MP’s full name.
- The correct honorific and postnominal letters.
- Their chamber, electorate, region or state.
- Any current ministerial, shadow or parliamentary office.
- The correct salutation.
- The postal or email address.
- The date and subject line.
- Your own name, role, mobile number and email address.

### GOOD LETTER EXCERPT

> The Hon. Ed Husic MP
> Member for Chifley
> Via: ed.husic.mp@aph.gov.au
>
> Dear Mr Husic,

The name, honorific, electorate, email address and salutation are internally consistent with the current parliamentary profile.

### BAD LETTER EXCERPT

> Ed Husic MP
> Minister for Industry and Science
> Member for Chifley
>
> Dear Minister

The letter uses a former portfolio and a ministerial salutation even though the addressee is no longer a minister. It is also undated and provides no postal or electronic delivery address.

# Good letter — in full

Wednesday, 5 August 2026

The Hon. Ed Husic MP
Member for Chifley
Via: ed.husic.mp@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Husic,

**MEETING REQUEST: HARMONISING PUBLIC-HOLIDAY DATES**

I am writing to request a meeting to discuss the case for harmonising public-holiday dates across Australia and the impact current inconsistencies have on businesses in Chifley.

In our June 2026 member survey, 18 businesses in Chifley reported paying additional wages or losing a trading day when one state observed a public holiday and the other did not. Together, businesses in your electorate estimated the additional cost in 2025 at $418,000.

We would value an opportunity to meet with you to discuss the dates causing the greatest disruption, provide the underlying electorate-level data and outline a practical proposal for greater coordination between states and territories.

Your office is welcome to contact me directly on the number below to arrange the meeting.

Yours sincerely

Michael Evangelidis
Chief Executive Officer, Australians for Harmonised Public Holidays
0410 688 478

# Bad letter — in full

Ed Husic MP
Minister for Industry and Science
Member for Chifley

Dear Minister

By way of background, the Australian Cross-Border Business Council was established in 1998 following discussions between businesses operating across state and territory borders.

The Council's work has expanded considerably during the past decade. We now produce quarterly updates, convene an annual conference, operate working groups on transport, taxation and industrial relations, and maintain relationships with chambers of commerce throughout Australia. Our board includes representatives from retail, logistics, manufacturing, tourism, hospitality and professional services.

The Council has long believed that closer cooperation between Commonwealth, state and territory governments would improve Australia's productivity and international competitiveness. This principle applies across taxation, workforce regulation, infrastructure planning, procurement, licensing and many other areas of government activity.

Public holidays are not observed consistently across Australia. This creates unnecessary complexity for businesses and reduces national productivity. Members in every state and territory have told us the current arrangements are confusing, inefficient and increasingly difficult to administer.

Businesses may need to alter rosters, pay penalty rates, close facilities, delay deliveries and explain different arrangements to customers. These issues are particularly acute for organisations operating in multiple jurisdictions, although the precise impact differs considerably between industries, locations and workforce structures.

Our board has considered this matter on several occasions. Some directors favour immediate national harmonisation, while others believe the Commonwealth should first commission further research and consultation. There are also differing views about which public holidays should be included and whether any changes should occur at once or be phased in over time.

We therefore ask you to meet with us to discuss this, and request that you support the establishment of a National Cabinet review, write to the Premier and the relevant ministers, meet with a delegation of our members, visit our Albury distribution centre and deliver the keynote address at our annual conference in November.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours,

Thomas Smith
Public Policy

CC: the Minister for Industrial Relations; the Minister for Tourism

## Where the six checks fail

- Letter is over one page
- Letter makes multiple requests — two meetings, policy support, letters to other office-holders, a site visit and a conference keynote
- Letter buries the requests late
- Generic claims, not localised electorate information
- Letter copies two Ministers unnecessarily
- The letter is not from the CEO, but a public policy adviser
- The letter is undated, omits a delivery address and uses a former portfolio and ministerial salutation

# Further tips

### Include a direct contact.

Give the phone number and email address of the person responsible for the request. For a meeting request, name the assistant authorised to arrange it — staff should not have to search for the right contact.

### Date every letter.

Political offices use correspondence-management systems. An undated letter is harder to log, trace and follow up.

### Use the recipient's preferred channel.

Many offices prefer online forms because they are easier to triage, but some forms do not issue receipts or accept attachments.

### Send attachments to a listed address.

If you need to send a PDF or supporting documents, use the office address listed by Parliament or GovConnex. If none is public, call the office and ask which channel staff prefer.

### Send a PDF, not an editable Word document.

A PDF preserves the layout across devices and signals that the correspondence is final.

### Keep the file size modest.

Oversized logos or letterhead images can prevent a document from being uploaded to an office's correspondence system.

### Allow reasonable time before following up.

For routine correspondence, one week is often too soon. Genuinely urgent matters are different and should be clearly identified as such.

### It is reasonable to confirm receipt.

When you call, be concise, patient and courteous. The staff member you speak to may be the person who routes or progresses your letter.

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# Localise your letters with electorate-level data

MPs think in electorates, not postcodes.

You may know where your members, employees, sites or suppliers are by address or postcode. But showing Jim Chalmers what your organisation means in the electorate of Rankin gives him a much clearer reason to listen.

On 28 August 2026, join Michael and Emmelia for a 45-minute Lunch & Learn on Impact Mapping. We will show you how to turn data your organisation already holds into a clear picture of its presence and impact across every federal and state electorate.

## WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- How to convert address and postcode data into federal and state electorates
- How to map your members, workforce, sites and suppliers to the MPs who represent them
- How to use electorate-level insights to write stronger letters and walk into MP meetings with a genuinely local story

**Register for the August Lunch & Learn. - https://luma.com/wbesea46**

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