

Why write a letter?

Writing a letter a politician is a way that you can make your representative/s aware of the existence of an issue or to promote your view on an existing issue. This document focuses on letter-writing as part of a broader strategy to build community and political support in the ACT for a 2020 greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of at least 40 per cent.

Letters are most effective when many people write to the same politician (and all of them) and where letters are personalised and targeted, especially where the politician is your local representative and might want your vote in a future election.

Before writing, keep in the mind the following:

- Remember why you are writing the letter: you want an emissions reduction of *at least* 40% by 2020.
- What change do you want to see or what message do you want to deliver?
- It might seem a bit obvious but remember to state the BIG ask: to legislate a 40% target (Labor and Greens) or to support a 40% target (Liberals).
- Think about including at least one SMALL ask. Examples including asking the MLA to advocate for the target in caucus, to contribute to the debate in the Assembly, to speak about the issue publicly and on the record, or to agree to a meeting with you.
- Do you want to include supporting information such as statistics, a reference to the Assembly committee which recommended the 40% reduction; public statements by the MLA or one of the political parties or a key stakeholder.
- Do you want to draw attention to actions taken by the government or another political party or a group that is passionate about the issue? eg current policies, the ACT Liberals' bill for a 30% reduction, SEE-Change forums, Love 40% Media Launch, Climate Whistleblowers Postcards from the Future, submissions to inquiries.
- Do you have a personal story to tell about why this issue (or a particular policy) is important to you? Do you have some special expertise that you could share?

Targeting the right politician and sending them the right message

Of course you can write a letter to all MLAs or to all members of the same party. However, the more personalised the better.

Here's some suggestions for what you might include in your letter;

- we can do this, we should do it, we need to see a bottom up approach to developing a low carbon city
- local action is important, particularly where there is no federal/international action
- cities and precincts from around the world are already setting local targets
- there are opportunities to develop businesses and industry expertise around 'green sectors'
- even when there is a price on carbon, being ready will leave us in stronger position
- Canberra could be a showcase of how to become carbon neutral
- People do care as shown at a federal political level over the last few years. Politicians need to catch up to where the community is at. The Canberra community want this.
- Many of us feel powerless because of a lack of political leadership on the issue
- It would be great if the three political parties could walk together and lead us to a brighter future.

And don't forget that one way you can make your letter personal is to remind your MLA that their position on this issue will be important to you next time you go to the polling place.

Below are the contact details for all MLAs according to which of the three electorates they represent. Then there's a map showing which suburb your electorate belongs.

MLA contacts by electorate

Brindabella

<u>Name</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Fax</u>	<u>Email</u>
Amanda Bresnan	<i>Greens</i>	62050130	62050777	bresnan@parliament.act.gov.au
Joy Burch	<i>ALP</i>	62050020	62053165	burch@act.gov.au
Steve Doszpot	<i>Liberals</i>	62050131	62050412	doszpot@parliament.act.gov.au
John Hargreaves	<i>ALP</i>	62050111	62050427	hargreaves@parliament.act.gov.au
Brendan Smyth	<i>Liberals</i>	62050099	62050859	smyth@parliament.act.gov.au

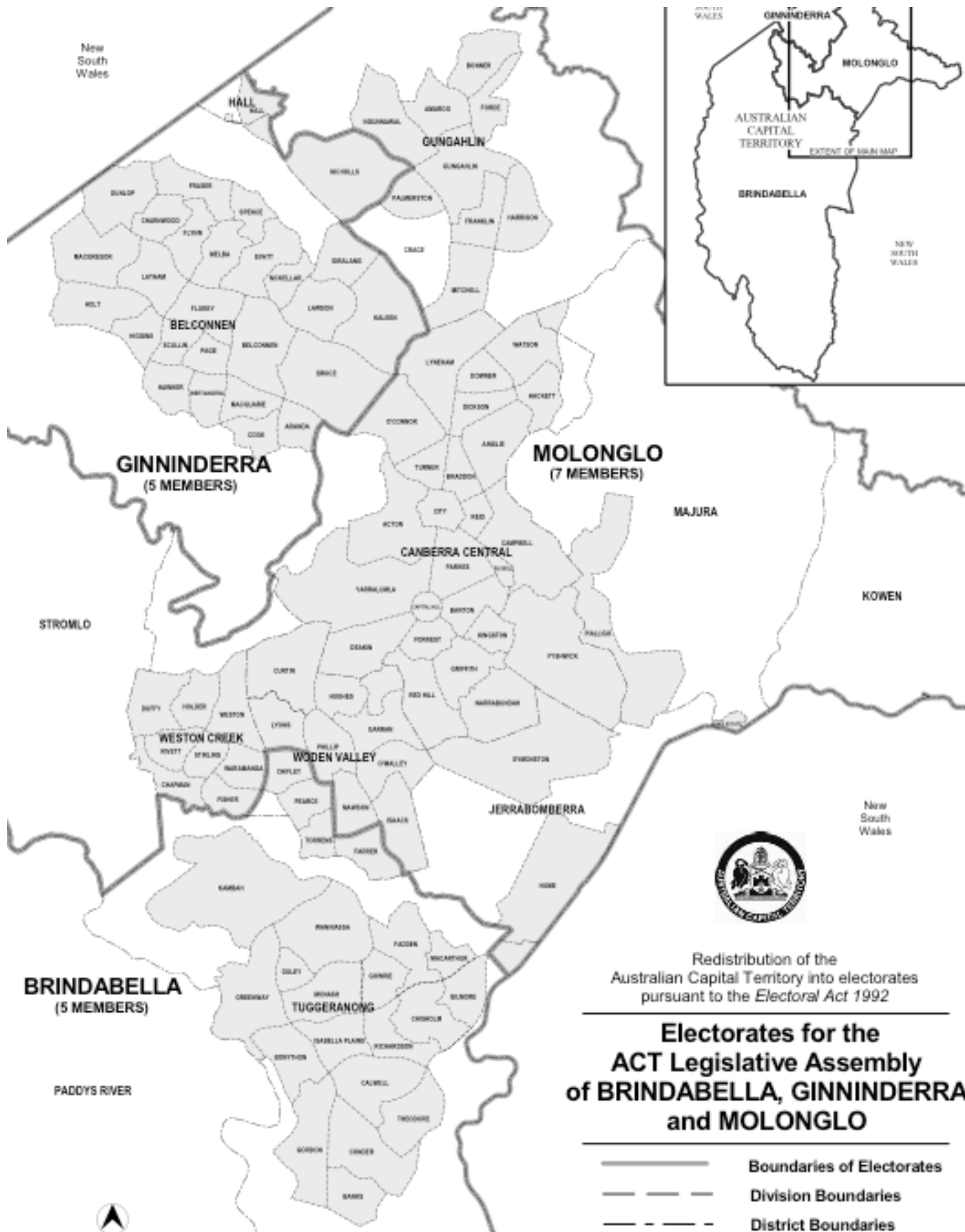
Ginninderra

<u>Name</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Fax</u>	<u>Email</u>
Alistair Coe	<i>Liberals</i>	62050101	62053002	coe@parliament.act.gov.au
Meredith Hunter	<i>Greens</i>	62050106	62050418	hunter@parliament.act.gov.au
Vicki Dunne	<i>Liberals</i>	62050283	62053106	dunne@parliament.act.gov.au
Mary Porter	<i>ALP</i>	62050100	62050040	porter@parliament.act.gov.au
Jon Stanhope	<i>ALP</i>	62050104	62050433	stanhope@act.gov.au

Molonglo

<u>Name</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Fax</u>	<u>Email</u>
Andrew Barr	<i>ALP</i>	62050011	62050017	barr@act.gov.au
Simon Corbell	<i>ALP</i>	62050000	62050535	corbell@act.gov.au
Katy Gallagher	<i>ALP</i>	62050840	62053030	gallagher@act.gov.au
Jeremy Hanson	<i>Liberals</i>	62050133	62053017	hanson@parliament.act.gov.au

Shane Rattenbury	<i>Greens</i>	62050005	62050007	rattenbury@parliament.act.gov.au
Caroline Le Couteur	<i>Greens</i>	62050051	62053000	lecouteur@parliament.act.gov.au
Zed Seselja	<i>Liberals</i>	62050323	62053001	seselja@parliament.act.gov.au



Below you will find a breakdown of portfolio responsibilities of the MLAs to help you pinpoint your message even further.

Labor Portfolios:

Simon Corbell

- Minister for Police and Emergency Services
- Attorney-General
- Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water
- Minister for Energy

Jon Stanhope:

- Chief Minister
- Minister for Business and Economic Development
- Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
- Minister for Territory and Municipal Services
- Minister for Transport
- Minister for the Arts and Heritage
- Minister for Land and Property Services

Katy Gallagher:

- Deputy Chief Minister
- Minister for Health
- Minister for Industrial Relations
- Treasurer

Andrew Barr

- Minister for Education and Training
- Minister for Planning
- Minister for Gaming and Racing
- Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation

Joy Burch

- Minister for Women
- Minister for Multicultural Affairs
- Minister for Children and Young People
- Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services
- Minister for Ageing

John Hargreaves

- Deputy Chair, Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and Water

Mary Porter

- Backbencher

Liberal Portfolios:

Zed Seselja

- Leader of the Opposition
- Shadow Minister for Planning and Housing Affordability
- Shadow Minister for the Environment and Climate Change
- Shadow Minister for the Ageing
- Shadow Minister for Housing Affordability
- Shadow Minister for Human Rights
- Shadow Minister for Transport Planning

(Liberal MLA on Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and Water)

Vicki Dunn

- Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations
- Shadow Minister for Women
- Shadow Attorney General
- Shadow Minister for Family and Community Services
- Shadow Minister for the Arts
- Shadow Minister for Nature Conservation and Water

Steve Doszpot

- Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation
- Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs
- Shadow Minister for Education and Training
- Shadow Minister for Disability

(Previously Shadow Minister for Environment, Water and Climate Change)

Alastair Coe

- Shadow Minister for Heritage
- Shadow Minister for Housing
- Shadow Minister for Urban Services
- Shadow Minister for Transport Services
- Shadow Minister for Youth

Brendan Smythe

- Deputy Leader of the Opposition
- Shadow Minister for Gaming and Racing
- Shadow Minister for Emergency Services
- Shadow Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism
- Shadow Treasurer
- Shadow Minister for Territory-Owned Corporations

Jeremy Hanson

- Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs
- Shadow Minister for Health
- Shadow Minister for Corrections
- Shadow Minister for Mental Health
- Shadow Minister for Police

Greens Portfolios:

Shane Rattenbury

- Attorney General
- Environment, Climate Change & Water
- Energy
- Police & Emergency Services
- Tourism, Sport & Recreation

Meredith Hunter

- Greens Parliamentary Convener
- Treasury
- Education & Training
- Community Services
- Women
- Indigenous Affairs
- Children & Young People

Amanda Bresnan

- Health
- Transport
- Disability & Housing
- Ageing
- Multicultural Affairs
- Industrial relations
- Corrections

(Greens MLA on Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and Water)

Caroline Le Couteur

- Planning
- Territory & Municipal Services
- Business & Economic Development
- Arts & Heritage

Penning your letter

Keep in mind the following before writing and as you write;

- *Language* - use formal language but remember you are expressing your point of view, so phrases like 'I feel' and 'I want to see' are very appropriate.
- *Be polite* - being abusive or offensive won't do you any favours—you can be firm and state your case without being rude.
- *Be positive* - try to avoid the entire focus of a letter being the failures of the MLA or their political party; try to focus on positive change or your vision for Canberra.
- *Be forceful* – remember that you are writing to a politician. Write powerfully. Sure, you want to tell them what you think, but you also want them to think they ought to listen to you. Don't hesitate to tell them you won't vote for them in future, or that you wouldn't have a problem telling your friends not to vote for them either. But you don't have to make this kind of statement.

Layout tips

Feel free to write the letter however you feel comfortable and remember it doesn't have to be a novel or cover every detail. In fact, a single paragraph of 4-6 lines will often suffice. Of course, a truly personal letter might need more space to cover all the details as well as get to the business of asking the politician to vote for 40 per cent! Hand-written letters are perfectly okay too, maybe even better because of the extra personal touch.

Here's some pointers if you feel like you need some guidance.

1. Contact details and date:

Include your name and contact details in the top right-hand corner of the page and the name and contact details of the MLA below your details but on the left-hand side of the page. Remember to add the date below this.

2. Form of address:

Options: Dear Chief Minister, Dear Minister, Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr (surname). You may add a line stating the subject of the letter below this eg "Re: Greenhouse gas emission reduction targets in the ACT"

3. Introduction:

- State what the issue is: the Government's upcoming decision on 2020 greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for the Territory.
- State what you think about it and/or want done about it: eg need government leadership or need to go down particular policy directions.
- If the MLA is your local member, be sure to tell them
- You can also say who you are or what groups you are involved with if you think this will build a rapport, allow you to provide particular information or boost your status.

4. Body:

Focus on two or three main points which support your view or which support the 40% goal, even further. Use examples or relate to your personal experience.

5. Conclusion:

- Reiterate your view expressed in the introduction/body of letter
- Pick one strong example from your letter to back up your point
- Ask for the politician to respond to your letter
- Conclude with a salutation, e.g. regards, yours sincerely
- Finish your letter with a signature
- Write your name and address on the back of the envelope

Where do I send my letter?

Post all mail to:

[NAME OF MLA]
ACT Legislative Assembly,
GPO Box 1020,
CANBERRA,
ACT 2601.

What about emailed letters?

Email addresses for each MLA can be found in the contact lists provided above. If you want to send the same email to more than one MLA, you can carbon copy (CC) them when you transmit your email.

Keep your eyes on the ball

Follow up your letter/email by telephoning the MLA's office if you have not received a response within 2 weeks of posting a letter or within 10 days of emailing a letter

Write a follow-up letter or email to the MLA if their response is not adequate, or to restate what they have committed to in a lobbying meeting you or other 40% team members attended, or which they included in their initial response

I'm absolutely at a loss about where to begin

Below is a template letter to get you going if you feel confident writing a letter from scratch. However, do try to personalise it by re-writing it or adding your own personal touch or special issues. This is because standardised 'form' letters are known to be less effective at making change than personalised, individually composed letters.

Template Letter

Name Surname
200 Green Street
Canberra ACT 2000

Jon Stanhope, MLA
ACT Legislative Assembly,
GPO Box 1020,
CANBERRA,
ACT 2601

Monday 15 July 2010

Dear **[Your Name]**,

I am writing to you because I have heard that in coming weeks the ACT Government will decide on a 2020 target for reducing the Territory's greenhouse gas emissions.

I've been very happy to hear also that the Government is considering cuts of 40 per cent, as recommended by the Assembly's own standing committee on climate change last year.

With the failure of international climate negotiations as well as the Federal Government's inability to implement a price on carbon pollution, I believe effective local action on climate change is even more important than ever before.

The ACT is well placed to be a national leader on this issue and is uniquely positioned to gain the benefits unlocked by ambitious government action.

I urge you to support legislation in the Assembly for a 40 per cent reduction in ACT greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 on a 1990 baseline.

Kind regards,

[Your Name]

[Signature]