



Step-by-Step Guide to Meeting Politicians

I want to meet a politician – what do I do?

Thank you for taking part in this important part of NZ ICP 2014 activities. When you're visiting your MP, remember people will be doing the same thing elsewhere in NZ - you won't be on your own. Also remember that you are the expert in communication.

It's the job of our politician to listen to you and telling your story will help your MP to understand the importance of communication, and how access to the right services will make a huge difference to the lives of thousands of New Zealanders. Remember that your MP meets with many people representing all sorts of causes, so state your cause clearly, and make sure that your MP has understood what you've said. Don't be afraid to repeat statements and ask questions.

You could even ask a client or their family to come along with you to share their story.

You can use the letter template at the end of this guide to request a meeting with your local MP.

Below is a guide to how to talk about the ICP2014 with your MP. Remember, it doesn't have to be a perfect performance. Your MP is there to listen and you can always follow up with facts and figures later. If they ask anything you can't answer just say you'll make a note of it and get back to them after the meeting.

Tips

Securing an appointment

- Be persistent, polite, and positive, and don't take no for an answer!
- Remind the electorate staff that this is both a national and international event
- If you can't get in to see an MP, ask to meet the advisor or electoral officer

Securing support

- Make sure the information you provide corresponds with the MP's understanding of communication disorders
- Don't be afraid to be passionate – you wouldn't be there if you didn't care
- Speak from experience and localise what you say
- It's OK to read facts and figures from a prompt sheet, and it's OK to make speaking notes for yourself
- Let your MP know that their support will help change the lives of people who traditionally haven't had a voice. This is their chance to make a difference
- While it's important to be positive, it's also important not to sugar coat the circumstances of people living with communication disorders. Explain simply and directly what the problems are that you see every day.
- Tell them you will issue a media release to the local paper if they offer their support. Offer to include a photo of them with their speech bubble. They may ask you to be in the photo too.
- Remember you are an important person – you live in their electorate and you are a voter. If the MP does not want to make any commitment, remind them that while many people with communication disorders don't have a voice, they do still have a vote.





Visiting your MP – A step-by-step guide

STEP 1: Confirm your appointment

Call your MP's electorate office

Follow up your letter or email to your MP with a phone call. You will probably speak to the electorate officer or personal assistant. Repeat your request of a meeting to discuss the ICP 2014 with your MP.

When your appointment is secured, make sure you get email confirmation.

If your MP is unavailable (this is quite likely for Ministers in particular) ask to meet with an advisor or electorate officer. You can ask them to pass your requests onto your MP.

Confirm location details and if you are offered at Parliament, let them know you'd prefer to meet at your MP's electorate office.

STEP 2: At your meeting with the MP

Arrive on time. Take your meeting email confirmation with you.

Time limit: Ask your MP how much time they have to spend with you (e.g. 30 mins).

Introduction: Thank your MP for making time to see you. Let them know that as a speech language therapist and supporter of the International Communication Project 2014, you are there because you want to build a country where all forms of communication are recognised, respected, and valued.

If a client or family member of a client has come with you, take some time before the visit to work out how they will be introduced, and which of you will explain why you are there.

Ask your MP what they know about communication disorders, or whether they

have any personal experience with speech language therapists. Use their answer to

frame how you speak from then on – if they know nothing about communication disorders you will need to start from the beginning!

Explain your personal experience of communication disorders as a speech language therapist – your MP needs to understand the obstacles your clients face every day, and how this impacts on them, their families, and their communities.

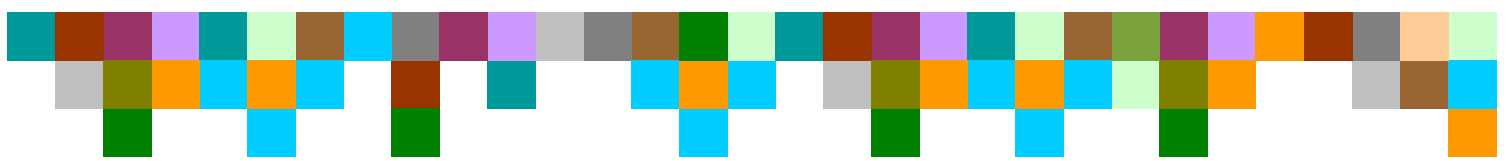
If a client is with you, ask them to speak about how their communication disorder has shaped their life, and how speech language therapy has helped.

Talk to your local MP about the aims of the ICP2014 and why access to the right services would change the lives of so many New Zealanders, especially those in their electorate.

Also talk about the service issues or problems you see in your local area. If you are asked about the aims of the Project, let your MP know the ultimate goal is to raise awareness in our communities, so people with communication disorders can live in a society that understands what it's like to have a communication disorder, what it means, and how to help. The ultimate goal of the ICP 2014 is to create a more communication equitable society, with international and local recognition that the opportunity to communicate is a basic human right.

Ask your MP to support the ICP2014. Let them know you want them to actively support the International Communication Project 2014 and our aim to make New Zealand a nation for communication. Here are some ways they can do it:





1. Sign up to the Pledge of Support for the Declaration of Communication Rights at www.communication2014.com
2. Appear in a photo with the Speech Bubble template, stating why they think communication is important
3. Appear in a short film endorsing the ICP2014
4. Add the ICP 2014 logo to their website – can be found at www.communication2014.com
5. Write to their party leader stating their support for the ICP2014 based on the views of people in their electorate
6. Raise the ICP 2014 in Caucus and ask their party to sign up to the Pledge of Support and support the campaign
7. Give a speech or ask a question about support for communication disorders in Parliament; and
8. Inform your electorate of your support – through local media or at public events

Offer your sincere thanks for your MP's interest, and direct them to the website: www.communication2014.com.

Send a copy of any photos to icpinnz@gmail.com and let us know how it went!

We're here to help – if you need any help or advice setting up a meeting, or how to prepare what to say, get in touch with us at icpinnz@gmail.com, and we will walk you through each step.

Good luck!



[Politician's name]

[Politician's local office address]

[Date]

Dear [politician]

Invitation to visit your local speech language therapy service in [location]

[Service information: xxx works with [client population – e.g. people living with aphasia, children with speech and language disorders etc.] and we work with [number of clients] each week.]

It is with great pleasure that I invite you to [service name] to meet the local people we work with and to talk to them and speech language therapists about the obstacles that people with communication disorders face every day.

As you may know, speech, language and communication disorders are some of the most common difficulties in early childhood and amongst children of all ages. Adults with long term conditions such as stroke, cancer, or progressive neurological conditions also experience significant speech, language and communication difficulties. The International Communication Project 2014 aims to raise awareness of these difficulties and demonstrate the difference access to the right service makes to the lives of clients, their families, and their communities.

Communication disorders can limit a person's ability to participate fully in family life, their community, education, and professionally. The negative impacts of communication disorders are well documented and include a higher risk of literacy problems, lower academic achievement, low self-esteem, and mental health problems. Studies have also shown that communication difficulties can lead to behavioural issues and an increased vulnerability to participation in criminal behaviour.

During the International Communication Project 2014, we need your help to build a future New Zealand where communication in all its forms is recognised and valued.

[Insert the story of a client to illustrate the impact communication disorders have on people's lives, as well as the positive difference access to the right services can have – see notes].

We would be delighted if you were able to visit us to see first-hand the impact of communication disorders and how access to services such as speech language therapy can make a difference.

I will be in touch with your office in the near future to see if we can arrange a convenient time for a visit. In the meantime, if you would like any more information, please do not hesitate to contact me on [telephone number] or [email address].

Yours sincerely,

[full name]