

# A Guide to Getting Started with Advocacy

## What is Advocacy?

Advocacy takes many forms, but the aim is always to influence policy.

Key components of advocacy include a call to action, e.g. specific requests or asks for action, evidence-based arguments supporting the key asks, and offering solutions.

This resource focuses on advocacy submissions because submissions are one of the main advocacy activities contributed to by members of AHPA and PHAA.

## Finding Open Consultations (Calls for Advocacy Submissions)

Check your email inbox for lists of open consultations (at both National and State/Territory levels) provided by:

- AHPA National Update monthly bulletin under the heading 'Advocacy Opportunities'
- PHAA The Pump newsletter (every Thursday) under the heading 'Submissions on our radar'

The lists of advocacy opportunities compiled by AHPA and PHAA are sourced from many websites that post open consultations.

Here is a list of the government websites with open consultations:

- [Commonwealth Department of Health](#)
- [Commonwealth - Senate](#)
- [Commonwealth - House](#)
- [Commonwealth parliament - new enquiries](#)
- [Commonwealth - all open inquiries](#)
- [Commonwealth-Attorney-General's Department](#)
- [Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet \(PM&C\)](#)
- [Department of Social Services](#)
- [ACT Government](#)
- [ACT Legislative Assembly](#)
- [NSW Parliament](#)
- [NSW Health department - regulations review](#)
- [NSW government](#)
- [NT Government](#)
- [Queensland Parliament](#)
- [SA government](#)
- [South Australia - Parliament](#)
- [Tasmanian government](#)
- [Victorian parliament](#)
- [Victorian government](#)
- [Western Australia - Parliament](#)
- [Western Australia government](#)

## How to Contribute to an Advocacy Submission for an Open Consultation

1. *Choose a topic(s) you have knowledge and/or experience in*
2. *Expression of your interest*  
For national submissions, contact [members@healthpromotion.org.au](mailto:members@healthpromotion.org.au) (AHPA) and [policy@phaa.net.au](mailto:policy@phaa.net.au) (PHAA) to express your interest in contributing.  
For state/territory submissions, contact your local branch.
3. *Before you start writing*  
You can look at completed submissions to familiarise with its structure and types of evidence included - keep in mind that submissions can be written with multiple people. A good way to start is to shadow more experienced members who are working on a submission to see the process of preparing an advocacy letter or submission.

[AHPA's completed advocacy submissions](#)

[PHAA's completed advocacy submission](#) (you can also access a list of recently completed submissions from PHAA's weekly The Pump newsletter)

## Timeframes and Content for Effective Submissions

Consultations are often only open for a short period. The timeframe for open consultations can range from a few weeks to a couple of months.

A common mistake is to just write unstructured thoughts and recommendations you have on the topic.

The link provided for an open consultation will have a list of questions called **Terms of Reference**, providing the specific areas the consultation is focused on. Effective submissions are structured as responses to Terms of Reference.

**Do not use combative/confrontational language.** Focus on what is needed and the evidence for this.

## Writing within your Area of Expertise

It is important to contribute to topics that you have knowledge of. This can be topics you have done projects on, have researched in, or lived experience.

It is also important to only respond to the Terms of Reference that you have knowledge or expertise in. It is OK to not provide a response to all Terms of Reference.

It is a good idea to write about the work that other organisations have done for Terms of Reference that are not your area of expertise (e.g. work by NACCHO).

Submissions that provide a **strong** response to some Terms of Reference will be more influential than submissions that respond to **all** Terms of Reference but have uncertain or weaker responses to some Terms of Reference.

## Tips for Contributing to an Advocacy Submission

All advocacy opportunities are reviewed by the AHPA President (National or Branch) and the PHAA policy team to ensure alignment with the Association's strategic priorities and a decision, based on a number of factors, is made regarding whether to proceed or not.

1. Begin with an **outline** that is based on the format of previous AHPA or PHAA advocacy submissions. There is introductory text included in all advocacy submissions. The outline should include the Terms of Reference.
2. Explain in the introduction why the issue/topic of the submission is important for AHPA or PHAA, why the issue/topic is important for health promotion/health equity.
3. Speak to the issues most important to you/AHPA/PHAA (remember you don't need to respond to all Terms of Reference)
4. Submissions don't need to be long. Shorter submissions that include evidence-based arguments and case study examples can be more powerful than unfocused long submissions.
5. Importantly, if you are contributing to an advocacy submission for AHPA or PHAA and the association has a **policy position statement** related to the topic of the submission the submission should refer to that policy and make arguments that are aligned with the positions adopted in that policy.  
Looking at any related AHPA or PHAA policies can also help with finding evidence-based arguments to support key asks and recommendations to be included in the submission.

## Recommendations and Endorsing the Work of Others

It is a good idea to use or endorse the work of others (e.g. PHAA, AHPA, the COSS network, NACCHO). These organisations may have submissions or policies on similar topics.

There tends to be overlap in the principles that are endorsed by AHPA, PHAA and partner organisations.

Looking up **recommendations** on the topic of the submission that other organisations have developed is a good way to contribute to submissions while learning.

Always **explicitly state** that the text is the work of others and that AHPA or PHAA **supports the position or echo's the recommendation made by that organisation**.

## Final steps

Once a draft of a submission is complete, it is reviewed and formally approved by the AHPA President (National or Branch), PHAA policy team or PHAA Branch President prior to being submitted.

Draft national submissions for are sent to [policy@phaa.net.au](mailto:policy@phaa.net.au) (PHAA) and to [national@healthpromotion.org.au](mailto:national@healthpromotion.org.au) (AHPA) for review.

State/territory submissions are reviewed by the state/territory committee members for AHPA and PHAA.

### Other ways to Contribute to Advocacy

1. **Advocacy letters** - shorter than a submission and focus on a specific ask/request. AHPA and PHAA have advocacy letters published on their website which provide examples of how an advocacy letter can be set out.
2. **Writing to your MP** - Tips earlier in this resource apply here. Effective letters to MPs and Senators are nonconfrontational. Focus on what you want to ask for and why it is important to you. Refer to your experience and evidence.
3. Contribute to **larger advocacy campaigns** (ACOSS' raise the rate campaign, the coalition led raise the age campaign). There can be power in numbers.
4. **Signing shared statements** advocating for actions to be taken.
5. **Writing for Croakey Health Media**. Writing based on lived experience or findings from your research can be of interest to Croakey.
6. Contribute to **policy position statements** – these are used in advocacy but are written over a longer time frame. AHPA and PHAA have policy position statements in progress.

### Resources for Further Information

Public Health Advocacy Institute of Western Australia (PHAIWA) Advocacy Toolkit (Fourth Edition): [https://www.phaiwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019\\_Advocacy-in-Action-A-Toolkit-for-Public-Health-Professionals-1.pdf](https://www.phaiwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019_Advocacy-in-Action-A-Toolkit-for-Public-Health-Professionals-1.pdf)

Public Health and Equity Resource Navigator, Protecting Public Health Authority & Advocacy Toolkit: <https://phern.communitycommons.org/protecting-public-health-authority-advocacy-toolkit/>

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