

Other ways you can have your say

There are lots of other ways of letting community leaders and policy makers know what you think about the big issues.

That's right. As Kiwi citizens, it's our job to help build the kind of society we want to live in. If we don't like the way something works, we can try to change it.

But it's better to be constructive – rather than moaning about things you don't like, get active and start working to get some changes. There are many ways to have your say.

Get in touch

Contact your electorate MP and let them know what issues are important to you. You can ring, fax, e-mail, write a letter, or even go to see them in person. It's their job to find out what the big issues are for the people in their electorate.

Find out the contact details for your electorate MP and for the list MPs who work in your area. This website will help:

www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/MPP/MPs/

Write

You can write to an MP at:

Parliament Buildings

Wellington

(You don't even need a stamp).

Why not write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about something that concerns you? It's a good way to get other people thinking about issues.

Team-up

You have probably seen protests on TV or in the newspaper, or maybe been part of one. Protesters are people who feel strongly about a cause and want to raise awareness of particular issues by having a march or demonstration. Most protests are peaceful, but sometimes people are arrested if they break the law.

People who feel strongly about a cause sometimes form pressure groups. They focus on a single issue or type of issue. They usually try to pressure decision-makers to make certain choices.

Choose a pressure group and find out information about it. What issues are their members concerned about? What action have they taken? Do you agree with what they are doing?

Check these pressure groups out:

- Amnesty International - www.amnesty.org.nz
- Business Round Table - www.nzbr.org.nz
- Federated Farmers - www.fedfarm.org.nz
- Greenpeace - www.greenpeace.net.nz
- Grey Power - www.greypower.co.nz
- NZ Council of Trade Unions - www.union.org.nz
- Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society
- www.forestandbird.org.nz
- Sensible Sentencing NZ - www.safe-nz.org.nz

Sign a petition

Signing a petition is an easy way of being active. It can be very effective. If enough people sign a petition, a citizens-initiated referendum can be held where everyone gets the chance to vote on the issue.

Go to a meeting

Sometimes forums and meetings are held where people discuss particular issues that they are concerned about. Your city might have a youth council where young people discuss issues that affect people their age.

Debate the issues

People don't always agree on everything. This is what makes our society interesting. Think how boring it would be if we all thought the same way. Your viewpoint on an issue will differ depending on who you are and what is important to you. If you don't agree with what's going on, it's up to you to make your voice heard. Nobody will know your view unless you make it known.

Work out your own ideas

Open your eyes to what is going on around you. What are the big issues in our society?

Find out what other people think about the big issues. Then ask yourself 'What do I think? Where do I stand? What kind of world do I want to live in?'

Talk over your ideas with your friends and family. If they disagree with you, don't be afraid to start a friendly debate. It's a good way of developing your ideas even further.

No one can tell you what to think. It's something that you need to work out for yourself.