

The Change Toolkit

Chapter 10. Designing a campaign

Earlier chapters of this guide have discussed a number of different strategies that you can use when advocating for changes to unfair laws and practices. This chapter considers how you bring those various strategies together in a ‘campaign’ for change.

Organising a campaign is a key way for CLCs to direct attention toward an important legal issue or message and persuade other people to shift their views or take specific action. Campaigning can have a number of objectives: for example, it may seek to effect legislative change, shift perceptions to mobilise public support, or simply disseminate information and raise awareness. If successful, your campaign can lead to the development and implementation of better laws, policies and practices that are more responsive to people’s needs.

This chapter offers some tips on how to prepare a campaign to accomplish change.

Preparation

To design an effective campaign, you should first create your **theory of change** (see Chapter 3). This involves formulating your basic objective and the work you plan to do to achieve it. As part of this process, it is important to assess the strengths and limitations of your CLC: take into account your size, location, membership, and expertise and think about how to shape your ideas and objectives to fit your capabilities.

The next step is to develop a **campaign strategy**. Before you start to decide on your techniques, you will need to articulate your *core message*: a simple, clear, and powerful presentation of the issue as it affects real people. Your message should encapsulate a relevant and timely problem, a practical solution, and an urgent action. It is also valuable to identify your *specific objectives* and

think about your *target audiences* from the outset. For example, if you want to effect legislative change, your main audience is Ministers and Parliament; if your priority is raising awareness, you should direct your efforts toward the general public and the mass media. In practice, though, an effective campaign will target various audiences to confront the problem from a number of possible angles.

Techniques to effect change

As discussed throughout this guide, there are various **techniques** you can choose to accomplish change. Different techniques will work better at different times and suit particular purposes, contexts and issues. For instance, whether the issue is politically sensitive or well publicised (or a combination of these) will be relevant to your choice of technique.

The most effective way to make progress toward lasting change is to combine techniques in a holistic and flexible way.

Here are some common techniques CLCs can use to effect change:

- **Gather the evidence and build the case for change:** remember, the information you have from working with your clients and communities is what gives you a mandate to work for change.
- **Prepare and launch a report** to promote the issue and as a lever for political and media attention. It could be helpful to collect some qualitative or quantitative data to support the arguments in your report.
- **Take part in government inquiries:** check to see whether government is conducting any relevant reviews. If so, you can make a submission, or seek to address a parliamentary committee.
- **Lobby decision makers:** directly contact members of parliament or local councils (or their advisors) to discuss a particular issue and try to influence amendments to the law. If there's no applicable legislation, you can push to have a new Bill initiated, and even prepare and provide a model provision.
- **Make good use of the media:** opinion pieces, media releases and press conferences are all excellent ways to highlight a particular problem. If you can, target relevant sources. For example, getting a local media source committed to the issue may be more instrumental than getting small articles in papers with larger distribution.

- **Build awareness and public support** as a way to reach communities, facilitate participation, increase understanding and generate support for your campaign. Ways to do this include writing open letters, organising petitions, holding community meetings or running public education programs.
- **Litigation and test cases** (see Chapter 8)
- **Working with other organisations:** many CLCs partner with other centres or agencies to collaborate on a short-term project or a single campaign, or establish informal networks to share information, ideas and support one another. Or, join a coalition and take formal joint action.
- **Be creative:** why not make use of stunts, theatre, art – the options are endless!

An Example

'Do Not Knock'

The Consumer Action Law Centre launched the Do Not Knock campaign after seeing an increasing number of people who had been misled or pressured into contracts by door-to-door salespeople, which left them worse off.

As a result of their contact with clients, Consumer Action became aware that door-to-door salespeople were:

- selling to the elderly, people with dementia and people who don't speak English;
- refusing to leave when asked;

- targeting refugee and remote Aboriginal communities;
- deliberately misleading consumers; and
- forging signatures as part of fraudulent sales.

As part of the Do Not Knock campaign, Consumer Action:

- developed and distributed a 'do not knock' sticker for people's houses;
- provided consumer information;
- liaised with industry and regulatory agencies;
- lodged door-to-door selling complaints to regulators; and
- contributed to law reform proposals.

It also established a web portal where Victorian consumers could register their desire not to be door-knocked by energy companies, which automatically transferred this request to all energy providers in the State.

The campaign raised consumer awareness of the risks of door-to-door selling and resulted in the successful prosecution of two large energy

companies (initiated by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC)). It also led to three energy companies in Victoria deciding to cease selling door-to-door and a Federal Court ruling that the 'Do Not Knock' sticker amounted to a request to leave a property, thereby giving all Australians the ability to control whether or not sales people can knock on their door.

The Federal Court ruling means that a salesperson who ignores a 'Do Not Knock' sticker at a person's house will be in breach of Australian Consumer Law and can face a hefty fine. This result, which has the potential to benefit all Australians, is an example of the wide benefits of some of the work that community legal centres do – in addition to providing legal assistance to individuals.

In the case of door-to-door selling, had Consumer Action chosen to simply help each individual to resolve their dispute with the seller, they would have helped only a tiny portion of those with problems, and the numbers needing help would likely be constantly increasing.

Acknowledgments

This chapter has been downloaded from <http://www.thechangetoolkit.org.au>. We recommend checking back to see if the content has been updated.

The Change Toolkit was prepared by the Federation of Community Legal Centres. The Federation is the peak body for community legal centres across Victoria.

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