

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT 2016

When is the best time to advocate for the arts? In 2016 there's a federal election as well as local government elections. Conversations are happening between candidates, the media and the electorate all over the nation. This means **people are listening** to what matters most to Australian communities.

Now is the time to make our voices heard:

#AusVotesArts

This year's key advocacy messages:

ARTISTS: CREATING OUR FUTURE

INVEST IN THE ARTS STRATEGICALLY

CREATIVE EDUCATION TRANSFORMS MINDS

CREATIVE EXPERTISE, CONFIDENT FUTURE

INVEST CREATIVELY IN AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE

PROPEL THE GENEROSITY THAT PROPELS THE ARTS

In this toolkit:

What is advocacy?

Why advocate? What can I do?

Engaging with elected representatives

Who is my local member of council, or state or federal parliament? When is it best for me to get in touch? What should my letter say?

A critical mass of passionate advocacy

Conversations – media – letters

How can I join in?

What should I say?

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is a public activity that puts forward a vision – your vision – with confidence and positivity. In doing so, it creates new spaces for discussion. It forms networks of like-minded people, as well as encouraging people to think differently. It empowers creativity. It can be as simple as a conversation at the local shops, or a letter to your elected representative, or it can be a large-scale campaign.

Importantly, advocacy is **constructive** and **compelling**.

It's **constructive** enough to offer a positive vision without attack or complaint.

It's **compelling** enough to sway those who don't already share your view into wanting to learn more, and ultimately, to champion that point of view themselves.

Advocacy is leadership that speaks from where you are. It's influential. Use your voice.

Why advocate?

Because art needs you. Sharing the insights, the processes and the experiences of what inspires us is one of the most powerful things we can do. It creates a society where creativity is appreciated and art is valued. It builds confidence and trust in the arts as a practice, as a community and as an industry. Visible arts advocacy encourages more media coverage of the arts, giving our artists greater exposure, and inspiring our elected representatives to engage further with the arts.

During times of heightened political interest in the arts, the focus of the media as well as our elected representatives is on what our community values the most. Together, we can lead a state-wide conversation on why the arts are a critical part of any political platform.

Art needs advocates to expand the spaces where it's experienced, the forums where it's discussed, and the ways it can be supported. Well-distributed arts advocacy such as that undertaken by Regional Arts Victoria Members generates a critical mass of public discussion that shows the world how important art is to us – and why.

What can I do?

Become a creative catalyst. Use this toolkit to **foster inspiring discussions** about the arts, build your relationship with **your local member**, and join a critical mass discussion on **social media**.

Here are some examples:



Regional Arts Victoria's
advocacy blog:
<http://inspiringarts.rav.net.au/>

The collected advocacy archive from the blog of
Esther Anatolitis, Director, Regional Arts Victoria:
<http://estheranatolitis.net/category/advocacy/>

Engaging with elected representatives

Who is my local member of council, or state or federal parliament?

Government makes it as easy as possible for us to get in touch. Find local members' names, contact details, bios and interests, formal modes of address and mailing labels:

	LOCAL COUNCIL OR SHIRE	VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT	AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT
FIND	http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/localgovernment/find-your-local-council	https://www.vec.vic.gov.au/lookup/LocalityFinder.htm	http://apps.aec.gov.au/esearch/
CONTACT	You'll find councillors' names and contact details for your region or ward on your local council or shire's website.	http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/members	http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators and Members/Guidelines for Contacting Senators and Members

When is it best for me to get in touch?

Your elected representative wants to know and understand what's important to you. Don't leave it until you've got something pressing; nurture your relationship. Research their interests and get in touch:

- When you'd like to invite them to your exhibition, performance or other arts event – even if it wasn't funded by government – and especially if there's a media or photo opportunity for them.
- When you've just presented an arts event, and you have photographs and stories to share.
- In response to a public consultation – keep an eye on their website for when you can contribute.
- When you have a specific concern – and take good care with how you express yourself. Use language that encourages a positive response, and offer constructive suggestions.
- When you're contributing to state-wide advocacy led by Regional Arts Victoria.

Check the Sitting Dates calendar to avoid clashing your invitations with when parliament is in session –

Victorian Parliament sitting dates:

<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/daily-calendar/yearly-sitting-dates>

Australian Parliament sitting dates:

[http://www.aph.gov.au/About Parliament/Sitting Calendar.aspx](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Sitting_Calendar.aspx)

What should my letter say?

Writing to an elected representative is a formal matter. Your letter should:

- Make its purpose clear at the outset. Are you writing simply to inform them about your work? Is there a particular response you are hoping for? Are you writing to request a specific action?
- Begin with a clearly stated aim e.g. "I am writing to let you know about [X]" or "thank you for your support of [Y]" or "seek your action on [Z]" or "invite you to my show at [time] on [date]."
- Name and briefly describe the work of your organisation or project.
- Know and commend the work that your elected representative has done in the arts.
- Be clear, concise and positive, conveying your passion for the arts in your own words.
- If you're writing about a specific issue, state the issue clearly and briefly, and be specific on how it affects you, your practice, and your organisation or project.
- Use language that encourages a positive response, and offers constructive suggestions.
- Be no more than one page long.

Make it a habit to **build your relationship**, so that your local member is well informed about the arts.

A critical mass of passionate advocacy

Conversations

At your local shops, at the pub, at the café, in the queue. Start by talking about your work, asking people what inspires them – or launch straight into election-year arts issues.

Media

Get to know the writers, bloggers, editors and producers of local regional media. Build a relationship: buy them a drink and tell them about the town's arts community and about your town work. Be sure to pitch stories to local editors and journalists early to ensure coverage.

Letters

Write to your local member about your arts passions and events well before an election. Then, write to introduce yourself and welcome newly-elected members, or congratulate re-elected members, after an election. There's some tips on these kinds of letters on the previous page.

How can I join in on social media?



[@RegionalArtsVic](#)



[RegionalArtsVictoria](#)



[@ esther](#)

Good social media posts are short, personal and connected via links and images.

Use Regional Arts Victoria's artistic vision of [Creative Communities](#), [Creative Places and Creative Catalysts](#) to champion your work.

Quote from the Regional Arts Victoria [Annual Report](#) to add some stats and stories to your advocacy.

Take a selfie in your studio, at rehearsal, or with your favourite work, and tag **#artisthefuture** before sharing it far and wide.

What should I say?

As an artist

talk about what inspires you – the what, where, how and why of your creative practice.

As an arts lover

talk about where and how often you experience art, and what it means to you.

As a writer

pitch stories to local media that profile the artists in your community.

As a small business worker or owner

talk about the impact of local innovators on your trade, and on your own innovation.

As a community leader

talk about how art brings people together, building resilience and community strength.

As an arts volunteer

talk about how creative experiences build new connections.

And, finally –

Enjoy! Be honest and passionate. Lead with the key advocacy messages on the first page to ensure that your individual approach strengths and is strengthened by a state-wide approach. Share your passion for the arts with confidence and style!