

Strategic engagement and influence

A toolkit

September 2024

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Q SHELTER

The role of Q Shelter

Q Shelter is the peak body working to address housing needs and homelessness in Queensland. Our vision is that every Queenslanders has a home. We seek to influence policy and investment in solutions and work to achieve system capacity to achieve those solutions.

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Foreword

Q Shelter is a peak organisation working to ensure every Queenslanders has a home. We work to influence policy and investment in solutions and to build system capacity to deliver those solutions.

Q Shelter is pleased to provide this toolkit as a resource to support your efforts to engage with decision-makers and community leaders on important matters relating to policy, investment and program design.

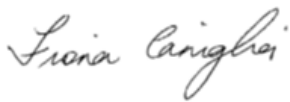
It includes information on how to build a plan to achieve strategic engagement. It also references quality tools and resources from other organisations to assist our stakeholders with a learning exchange.

There are many ways to seek to influence policy and investment outcomes, and the processes of influence are diverse. This toolkit identifies a repertoire of activities underpinned by a clear purpose and objectives. This will help define a direction and the methods most useful in achieving your ultimate purpose.

Many of the changes we seek can require multiple activities and a degree of time. It may be helpful to think about the scope and the scale of what you are trying to achieve and then design an approach that you think will have the best impact, within the scope of your resources. While this tool kit includes a range of options, at Q Shelter we recognise that resources including time may be limited and that choices about scope and scale are some of the most important ones we can make.

Please stay in touch about your progress. We are available to discuss any questions you may have along the way.

Yours sincerely



Fiona Caniglia
Chief Executive Officer

1. What is advocacy?

1.1 Definitions

There are different types of advocacy such as:

- Self-advocacy: where an individual or household seeks to make positive changes to their circumstances, resources, rights, and access to services. Self-advocacy can seek to change the quality of service delivery, allocation of resources, the recognition and activation of rights, and how systems work to meet identified needs.
- Individual advocacy: where a person or organisation works with and on behalf of someone who is seeking to make positive changes to their circumstances, resources, rights, and access to services.
- Systems advocacy: works beyond the needs of an individual to progress positive change impacting a larger group of people and whole communities.

As a peak organisation, Q Shelter is focused on systems advocacy where we are seeking positive and long-term change to ensure every Queenslanders has a home.

It is important to understand that advocacy is a repertoire. Systems can be complex and seeking to change systems is also complex, involving multiple steps and stages and often a long-term set of activities.

"Advocacy is more than just raising awareness of an issue, problem, or situation. It is about trying to seek a positive change." Global Network of Civil Organisations, 2016¹

"Systems advocacy involves organisations, groups, or individuals working for long-term social and legislative change to make sure legislation, policies and practices equitably support the rights, needs and interests of all people. Advocacy is done through acting, speaking, listening, and writing to promote, protect and defend the rights of a person or community." Health Consumers Council WA²

"Policy advocacy is taking action to create policy or legal change." WWF Advocacy Toolkit³

Key message: advocacy is a repertoire. There are many steps, activities, and alternatives to consider in making positive and sustainable change.

1.2 The advocacy process: an overview

Many different activities can be chosen as part of advocacy. It is important in the first instance to have an overview of some important stages that might be involved. These include:

¹ Lucy Pearson, Tanjir Hossain, and Jesus Cordero, 2016, [National Advocacy Toolkit](#), Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction.

² Health Consumers Council WA, 2024, [Website](#).

³ WWF, 2022, [WWF Policy Advocacy Toolkit](#), WWF.

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Table 1: Steps in the Advocacy Process

Steps in the advocacy process	Key questions
Define the problem or issue	What problem are we seeking to solve?
Define the changes that would address the problem or issue	What changes would solve that problem?
Build alliances and connections with key people and organisations that share your concerns	Who can we work with to achieve those changes?
Develop and implement a collaborative advocacy plan	What is our purpose, objectives, strategies and actions to achieve those changes?
Monitor progress (along the way)	Is the plan working? What do we need to adjust or do differently?
Evaluate and capture learning for the future (at the end or at a significant milestone)	What went well? What would we do differently next time?

2. Developing an advocacy plan

2.1 Understanding the context

2.1.1 The drivers of housing and homelessness challenges

It is important to have overall literacy about the driving causes of current housing and homelessness challenges.

A range of contextual factors are impacting the extent of unmet housing needs and homelessness including:

- Lack of long-term planning and targets for housing supply
- An undersupplied housing market compared to the demand for housing
- A growing population
- Decreasing household size
- Building and construction industry challenges including workforce availability, skills. Supply chain issues, and overall rising costs.
- An infrastructure program attracting a workforce to Queensland
- Historically low levels of social and affordable housing that have not kept pace with population needs
- Decreasing home ownership
- An overreliance on the private rental market which provides little security of tenure and is undersupplied
- A system that invests more in crisis responses to homelessness rather than genuine prevention.

Q Shelter has produced an introductory video on the causes of homelessness that you can share with stakeholders. You can access it from the Q Shelter Vimeo site: <https://vimeo.com/925203136>.

The drivers may also be unique to your area, and it is important to analyse broader trends and drivers while also considering your region's unique needs and context.

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2.1.2 Evidence

In its policy advocacy toolkit, the Worldwide Fund for Nature considers being 'evidence-based' a golden rule for strategic advocacy⁴. Evidence is important because it helps to build an understanding of the challenge among those whom we are seeking to influence. It also builds trust with stakeholders because there is data and proof behind the challenges and the solutions.

Evidence can come from:

1. Your own organisation's data:
 - Data on demand for services
 - Data on the profile of people and their needs
 - Data on positive outcomes and what influenced those outcomes
 - Data on where outcomes are harder to achieve and why
 - Your service delivery model and how it is supported by evidence.
2. Making best use of reputable data sources about housing needs and homelessness

Other reputable data sources about unmet housing needs and homelessness include:

Table 2: Data sources on unmet housing needs and homelessness in Australia

Author/publisher	Data source	Description
Australian Bureau of Statistics	The Census Community Profiles	ABS Community Profiles can generate data tables on various geographical areas.
Australian Bureau of Statistics	The Census Quick Stats	Summary profiles for geographical locations.
Australian Bureau of Statistics	Enumeration of homelessness	Census reports and data tables by region on the enumeration of homelessness
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare	AIHW Data on specialist homelessness services	Annual report on the demands for and delivery of specialist homelessness services
City Futures UNSW	Housing Needs Dashboard	City Futures UNSW Data Dashboard about regional housing needs
CoreLogic	CoreLogic housing chart pack	Data on residential property markets
Housing Australia	Housing Australia Data Analytics	Housing Australia publishes various reports including an annual report on the State of the Nation's Housing Report
Local Government	Local government	Some local governments analyse data for their region and make it available to the community.
Queensland Government	Regional Housing Profiles	Queensland Housing Profiles can generate a profile for various geographical areas ranging from suburbs to local government areas.
Queensland Government	Regional Profiles	The Queensland Regional Profiles include additional data to the Queensland Housing Profiles.
Queensland Government	Social housing register	Regional data on households registered for social housing by Housing Service Centre
REIQ	Rental vacancy rates	REIQ quarterly data media
Residential Tenancies	Residential Tenancies Authority median rents	Quarterly data based on bond lodgement data that is available by postcode

⁴ [WWF 2022 Advocacy Toolkit, WWF.](#)

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Author/publisher	Data source	Description
Authority Queensland		
The Australian Housing Data Analytics Platform	The Australian Housing Data Analytics Platform	The Australian Housing Data Analytics Platform (AHDAP), is a collaborative platform supported by the City Futures Research Centre, UNSW Sydney and the NCRIS-enabled Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC)

3. Data and research on solutions

The other types of evidence that can assist include evidence about the solutions. There are many sources of research and evidence about what works. Some sources include:

Table 3: Research and data institutes and sources

The Australasian Housing and Research Institute - AHURI
UQ-HAUS
UNSW – City Futures Research Centre
The Centre for Social Impact
The Deck

2.1.3 Policy statements and submissions

You can draw on the work of peak organisations that may have policy submissions and proposals based on sector engagement and evidence. Here are some examples developed by Q Shelter, for your reference:

- [Q Shelter's annual Pre-Budget submission - Better Together](#)
- [Q Shelter's pre-election platform](#)

In Q Shelter's submission to all political parties and candidates contesting the 2024 Queensland State Election, six focus areas are highlighted:

1. Prevent and end homelessness
2. Rapidly increase housing supply
3. Supercharge the community housing sector for growth
4. Strengthen the private housing system
5. Achieve housing system reform
6. Amplify and embed the voices of people with lived experience and expertise.

2.1.4 Understanding the current policy context

Each level of government plays a part in addressing housing needs and homelessness. Examples of the role of each tier of government include:

- Federally, through income support and funding agreements with state governments for the supply of housing and the provision of support. The Australian Government also delivers jobs services helping people gain opportunities for training and employment.
- At the state level, funding is also provided for housing and support, and contracts are administered to deliver housing growth and associated support services. The Queensland Government also provides universal services such as health and education which are very important to the wellbeing

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of all Queenslanders and can help address the needs of people experiencing homelessness and unmet housing needs.

- At the local level, local regulations about public space, community development programs and the development of planning schemes to guide development are all important to housing and homelessness responses. Local governments in Queensland are required to have a housing action plan. Some local governments are working closely with community housing providers through partnerships to identify land and develop more social and affordable homes.

Q Shelter focuses on Queensland and works through National Shelter to address matters of federal government policy. Focusing on Queensland, Q Shelter develops and advocates policy and investment solutions at the state and local government levels. Our major focus is working with the state government to achieve the required solutions.

It is always important to be literate about the current policy context. It helps to find a true starting point for targeted proposals.

Local Government (Councils)

Many local governments in Queensland are currently developing a local housing plan as a requirement of the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (2021-2025).

You can find out more about Local Housing Action Plans at this [link](#).

Queensland Government

In Queensland, several policies and plans are under implementation. Q Shelter has highlighted the importance of maintaining momentum on the development and delivery of these policies and plans in the future.

A full list of links to these policies is provided in Appendix 2. A key document for reference is the Queensland Government's [Homes for Queenslanders](#) which outlines a plan with five key pillars.

The Queensland Government has established a *Homes for Queenslanders* Implementation Taskforce consisting of peak bodies and other experts to support and guide Homes for Queenslanders as a cornerstone policy and plan.

The Queensland Government has also established the [Housing Supply Expert Panel](#). The Queensland Housing Supply Expert Panel provides independent, expert advice to the Queensland Government on:

- housing diversity and affordability
- state and local government strategies, plans and policy responses addressing land and housing supply
- monitoring of dwelling supply benchmarks.

There is currently an [Independent Review of Homelessness Responses](#) inclusive of input from a reference group.

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Figure 1: Existing policies and plans as a foundation for the future.



Federal Government

The Australian Government is currently developing a housing and homelessness action plan. They have published a [consultation report](#) as part of this process.

[Housing Australia](#) is a major delivery agency funded by the Australian Government. They are administering the Housing Australia Future Fund as one part of their role, as well as the Home Guarantee Scheme and offer several programs of funding to support the growth of housing supply.

The [National Housing Supply and Affordability Council](#) is a statutory body established under legislation. It provides independent, evidence-based advice on Australia's housing system. It consists of nine members.

2.1.5 Analysis of the strategic environment

You can gain a better understanding of the policy context though specific analysis of how the broader environment impacts the problem you are seeking to solve, and its solutions. This can include analysis of:

- Political factors such as policies, legislation, the electoral cycle and voting trends
- Economic factors such as inflation, interest rates, tax policy, and housing affordability
- Social factors such as demographic trends, population growth and profile, and community relations.

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There may be global, national and local trends related to the problem, and its solutions. When we seek to understand these, it can help define the focus of your advocacy and what factors can effect change. An important question in any advocacy plan is whether you have the scope and remit to influence the solutions. For example, it may be challenging to directly influence interest rates. It may be more achievable to influence the level of investment in social housing in your State or region. There will be many policies that can be influenced and this process analyses where you could focus.

2.2 Define the problem or issue

With an understanding of the context, it is possible to move beyond general statements about the problem to more specific problem definitions. This helps to focus advocacy efforts on specifics rather than generalisations.

The problem definition may include:

- A clear and specific statement about the problem to be solved
- A geographical focus (if relevant)
- How wider issues or problems are experienced more specifically for a region and/or for a population group.

General statements may not provide enough guidance on what the problem is:

Table 4: Guide to problem statements

Broad statements	More specific statements
There is not enough social housing	XX households need social housing in this region.
Homelessness is increasing	The demand for local services has increased by 20% in two years. This is equal to X number of households needing assistance.

Different problem-analysis tools can help a group to define the problem they want to solve.

The World Health Organisation has summarised three examples of problem analysis approaches including:

- The Problem Tree: a visual method seeking to define the main problem, its causes and consequences
- The Five Whys: A Root Cause Analysis
- The Fishbone Analysis: a visual and expanded way to analyse multiple root causes of a problem.

Source: World Health Organisation: [WASH and Health Working Together - a how-to guide](#)⁵

With a clear and accurate problem definition, it is more likely that solutions will be effective. It is the starting point to achieve solutions that will be specific, targeted and likely to succeed.

2.3 Define the changes that would address the problem or issue: a focus on solutions

Defining the required changes involves writing a specific statement or plan for how to address the problem you have identified.

⁵ WASH and Health Working Together: a 'how to' guide for NTD Programs, https://apps.who.int/wash-health-toolkit/contents/uploads/2019/05/Tool-10-Tool-Problem_analysis_approaches_for_the_planning_process.pdf

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There are many methods available to design solutions to complex social challenges. This can include co-design methodologies. If you are working in a collaborative alliance, it is important to include a step where the solutions are designed together. The process helps to include varied perspectives and secure a deeper commitment from participants.

Some resources that can help with designing solutions include:

Table 5: Solution design resources

Author/Publisher	Data source	Description
Make:Iterate	Designing for social change: a quick guide	An outline of social design approaches
IDEO U	How to design for social impact: 4 tips for complex challenges	A blog by Jocelyn Wyatt on designing for social impact
Tim Brown and Jocelyn Wyatt	Design thinking for social innovation in the Stanford Social Innovation Review	An article on Design Thinking
Jo North The Big Bank Partnership	How to facilitate creative problem-solving workshops	A tool kit

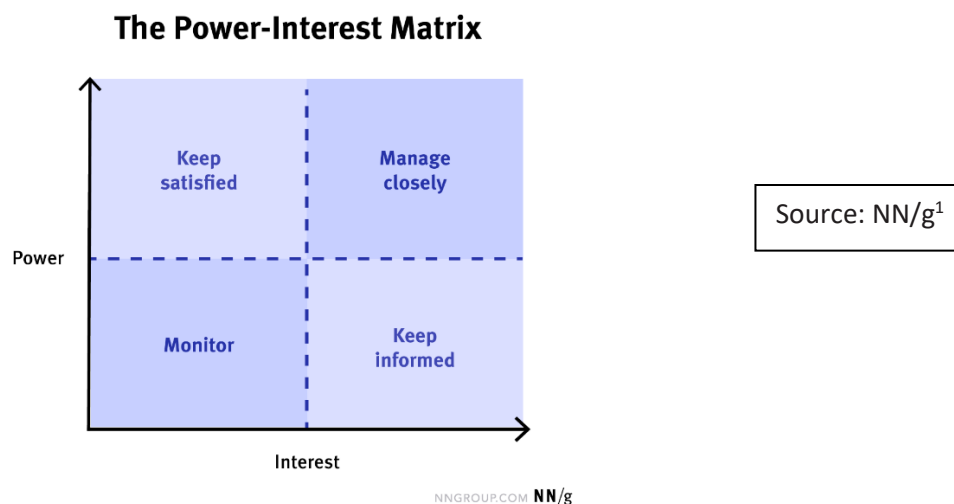
Specific solution statements are critical to successful strategic engagement. It is important to use time with key influencers and decision-makers focused as much as possible on the solutions. This opportunity is to present that you understand the problem but also have credible solutions that solve that problem. It is easier to keep talking about the problem than it is to present solutions. Decision makers and influencers want to know what to do to solve the challenge.

2.4 Identify and analyse stakeholders

Once there is a problem definition, specific stakeholders impacted and/or influential in addressing the problem need to be identified.

There are many stakeholder analysis tools. A simple one is called the Mendelow Matrix developed by Aubrey Mendelow in 1991⁶. It is used to chart how much influence and power a stakeholder has and how much interest they have. This can help refine who to engage with and how.

Figure 2: Stakeholder analysis matrix



⁶ Maria Rosata, 2024, [Website: Stakeholder Analysis for UX projects](#) Nielsen Norman Group.

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Once stakeholders have been mapped using this matrix, it is possible to develop a more detailed stakeholder engagement plan. A simple matrix can be developed as follows:

Table 6: Stakeholder engagement plan template

Name of person	Name of organisation	Contact details	Power and influence	Interest in the problem	Stated Concerns	Actions	Engagement methods	Timeline	Responsibility	Tracking

It is important to continuously analyse stakeholders with a focus on their influence and impact. Things may change, key people or organisations may emerge, and milestones may be reached.

In stakeholder analysis, you are trying to identify the key decision-makers and influencers who can help make the changes that are needed.

- Who can make the changes?
- Who cares about making these changes?
- Who is impacted by these changes?
- Who feels a sense of urgency about the changes?

A stakeholder engagement plan also allows you to track who you have spoken to, what they have said, any follow-up activities and next steps. This can be a basis for reporting and for ensuring that you are engaging across stakeholders with different views, political ideologies and perspectives.

2.5 Forming alliances

Forming alliances is one of the most important ways to build momentum and demonstrate support for the challenges you are seeking to solve. It brings more resources to the process and expands the understanding of the problem and the scope of solutions.

Forming alliances may involve:

- Consideration of whether an existing group or alliance is appropriate to progress a collaborative approach to seeking change. A key purpose in doing this is to prevent fragmentation of efforts and add to momentum.
- If there is no existing group, further stakeholder analysis can help to identify individuals and organisations that share your concerns and/or have the knowledge, skills or a role that could support the change process
- As with any alliance, it is important to know what values and methods are important to you so that you can engage with others who share not only a concern about the issue but also about how to make progress
- Begin meeting with potential alliance members and seek their views about your concerns, the possible solutions and how to achieve change
- Bring a group together to agree on the scope of activities to be undertaken and to develop a collaborative advocacy plan
- Explore an agreed approach to communications, promotions and media engagement
- Decide on logistics such as document storage so that people are engaged and involved
- Spend time exploring and agreeing on key values and how they translate into behaviours
- At key milestones, celebrate success.

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It is important in alliances to allocate responsibilities. Above all it helps to engage people in the processes of change so that any impact and outcomes are genuinely shared. At key milestones, it is also great to know that the capacity and capability of the members of an alliance have been strengthened as a future legacy.

2.6 Detailed planning

2.6.1 Defining scope

The scope of the plan will be determined by the scope, complexity and timescale of the work that is to be undertaken. Scope is also determined by available resources. After some initial scoping either as an organisation or as an alliance, it is important to consider:

- What resources do we have? Consider funds, time, and capabilities.
- What resources do we need?
- How long is it likely to take to achieve the change or changes we are seeking?

One way to think about scope and scale is to differentiate whether you are planning a program, project or activity.

Table 7: Definition of terms to define scope

Scope	Definition	Examples
Program	Longer-term or ongoing includes multiple projects and streams of work such as: • Community education • Media • Research • Submissions • Events • Delegations.	Advocacy plan spanning a three or four-year electoral cycle from beginning to end.
Project	Time-limited and / or short term May include several activities	Research and write a report to present recommendations on how the Olympics and Paralympics can deliver a legacy housing outcome. Engage with key decision-makers about how the Legacy Plan can achieve housing outcomes. Participate in formal engagement mechanisms seeking views on legacy.
A single activity	Time-limited and singular in focus	A day of engagement to meet elected members of parliament to amplify concerns and present solutions for a particular region.

2.6.2 Develop a plan

For projects and programs, it can help to define:

- Time scale
- Vision

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- An overall purpose for the scope of work
- Objectives
- Strategies and actions
- Responsibilities
- Deliverables
- Timelines
- Mechanisms for monitoring and tracking
- Resources.

Table 8: Planning template

Key element	Description
Time scale	What is the time scale for an advocacy plan: Is it the duration of a particular advocacy project or activity? Is the duration for a longer-term program of advocacy work inclusive of various projects and activities?
Vision	What vision for change are we seeking to contribute to? Vision statements usually indicate the broader change we hope to affect.
Purpose	What is the overall purpose of our advocacy? This is a more specific statement about what you hope to achieve as a contribution to the vision.
Objectives	What specific objectives will help you achieve your purpose? Objectives highlight clusters of work that will achieve the delivery of your purpose.
Activities	What activities will we undertake to achieve our objectives?
Responsibilities	Who is responsible for leading the delivery of the program/project/activity? Who is responsible for specific activities?
Milestones and timeframes	What are the key milestones, and the time frames we need to achieve them? Are there critical milestones in the broader policy environment that we should be aware of and work to.
Monitoring impact	How will we measure outcomes and impact? How will we evaluate at the end of a milestone or at the end of the program?
Communication with partners, stakeholders, and influencers	What objectives about communications are you planning to achieve? Who are our key partners/stakeholder groups and how do we need to communicate with them? Do they have an audience that can be leveraged for communication purposes?
Stakeholder engagement: Who, what, when.	A specific list of the key contacts, names, phone numbers, email addresses (See section 2.4) What key messages are we planning to deliver, to whom, by what method, and by when?

2.7 More on key messages and communications

Communication is a critical feature of any advocacy plan. The choice of communication methods will consider what you seek to achieve and take into consideration resources such as time and money.

As part of an overall advocacy plan, a detailed approach to how communications can support the delivery of the plan will be helpful.

It can help to:

- Set some objectives
- Define key messages for each audience group
- Agree on communications products and tools such as reports, fact sheets, short videos etc.
- Select methods such as advertising, social media, printed products, and media
- Plan for internal communications across the organisation and/or alliance so that everyone is aware of progress
- Set a budget.

Communications activities might include:

- Direct Mail
- E-mail and SMS
- Phone calls
- Meetings (in person / online)
- Brochures, newsletters and flyers
- Websites, videos and social media
- Media and advertising
- Postcards
- Reports and submissions.

Advocacy messages should be brief, focused, solution-oriented and supported by evidence. Ideally, they are framed in plain English, to provide the broadest possible reach and understanding.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has developed a comprehensive [communications strategy template](#)⁷. A section of your overall advocacy plan could focus on communications as a way of consolidating and embedding communications within the overall set of activities.

3. The repertoire of activities

There are choices to be made about which activities you will undertake as part of your advocacy plan. The choice of activities can be impacted by many factors including:

- Strategic considerations
- Available resources
- Timing
- The purpose and role of your organisation
- The strength of your alliances.
- Political climate.

⁷ WWF, [Communications Strategy Template](#).

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Activities might include (but are not limited to):

- Meetings with key decision-makers
- Media activities such as media releases, opinion articles, media stops, media campaigns to launch reports, raise awareness
- Writing letters
- Conducting primary research
- Literature reviews
- Report writing
- Issues papers
- Report cards
- Webinars
- Submissions
- Shopfronts
- Attendance at community events
- Forums and workshops
- Participation in formal inquiries
- Participation in formal consultation processes, focus groups, reference groups and task forces
- Forming an ongoing alliance
- Candidates' debates
- Campaigns
- Petitions
- Rallies.

The choice of methods is important and needs to align with the broader advocacy plan. The activities chosen need to help deliver the impact you are seeking to achieve.

Some activities more than others focus on building a wider understanding and concern about the challenge you are trying to address. Building and demonstrating wider concern about an issue can help decision-makers understand they have a mandate for change. Not all advocacy activities play out in a public way. Some will be through meetings and other engagement activities to negotiate outcomes for example.

The number of potential activities demonstrates again that advocacy is a repertoire.

4. Storytelling and the power of lived expertise and experience

Storytelling and case studies are important additional ways of explaining the challenge and building wider support for the solutions. When those stories and experiences are conveyed by people with lived expertise and experience it can be very powerful.

It is important to be proactive about collecting stories, documenting case studies and recruiting people with lived expertise. Anyone prepared to share details about their own experiences can find the experience both empowering and confronting. Where people have experienced trauma, there is a risk that telling their own story may raise difficult memories and exacerbate trauma.

It is important that people can raise their own voices and represent their own experiences. Organisations in the community services sector have an important role in supporting these opportunities and offering resources to help people prepare and remain safe. These activities shouldn't just be last minute, but carefully planned so that people with lived expertise can play their part and be strengthened as a result.

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Some sectors have very advanced approaches to ensuring people with lived experience and expertise are supported in advocacy activities.

The following organisations have some helpful resources about the process of engaging and involving people with lived expertise and experience:

Table 9: Links to resources on engagement of people with lived experience and expertise

Organise name	Link to resources
Housing Older Women Movement	https://housingolderwomen.org.au/
Queensland Mental Health Commission	https://www.qmhc.qld.gov.au/engage-enable
Mental Health Lived Experience Peak	https://mhlepq.org.au/
Queensland Disability Network	https://qdn.org.au/

Q Shelter has online training to understand trauma and to be more trauma-informed in our practices. This training is available at this [link](#).

5. The role of charities in advocacy: achieving impact and accountability

When a charity is registered under the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission, there are some rules that need to be followed.

The following information steps through the role of the ACNC, as well as key guidance for charities on the parameters in which they can undertake advocacy and strategic influence.

5.1 The ACNC

The Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC)⁸ is the national regulator of charities. The ACNC was established in December 2012 to achieve these objects:

- Maintain, protect and enhance public trust and confidence in the Australian not-for-profit sector.
- Support and sustain a robust, vibrant, independent and innovative not-for-profit sector
- Promote the reduction of unnecessary regulatory obligations on the sector.

The activities of the ACNC include:

- Registering organisations as charities
- Helping charities understand and meet their obligations through information, guidance, advice and other support
- Maintaining a free and searchable public register so that anyone can look up information about registered charities
- Working with state and territory governments (as well as federal, state, and territory government agencies to develop a 'report-once, use-often' reporting framework for charities.

5.2 Rules about advocacy

Charities play an important role in supporting progress and change at the level of policy and investment.

There are rules however that guide the scope of activities related to advocacy that a Charity can undertake.

⁸ The source of this information is the ACNC website: www.acnc.gov.au

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A registered charity must, among other things:

- Have charitable purposes that are for the public benefit, or purposes that are 'incidental or ancillary' to, and in furtherance or in aid of those charitable purposes
- Not have a 'disqualifying purpose'
- Not be an individual, political party or government entity.

Your charity may have more than one organisational purpose - and many activities - and still be a charity, just as long as these purposes and activities all further your charitable purpose.

5.3 Approved activities

Examples of approved activities mentioned by the ACNC include:

- making submissions or giving evidence to existing or proposed laws, government policies or practices
- generating public debate about or seeking an explanation of current or proposed laws, government policies or practices
- distributing information on, analysis, or comparing party policies as they relate to charity's purpose
- publishing research on current or proposed laws, government policies or practices
- directly promoting the charity's purpose, or the interest of their beneficiaries, to elected representatives and public officials
- hosting, promoting or participating in public debates on law or policy matters.

5.4 Disqualifying purposes

There are some disqualifying purposes under the Act:

- Engaging in or promoting unlawful activities
- Promotion of a particular political party or candidate
- Being a political party.

[You can read more about disqualifying purposes at this link.](#)

5.5 Managing risks

This section highlights some of the ways Q Shelter manages risks associated with strategic advocacy:

- Engage with all political parties
- Distribute policy submissions to all political parties and during a campaign, to a cross-section of candidates
- Offer meetings with all political parties
- Develop policy submissions based on evidence and engagement (rather than only opinion)
- Maintain a register of strategic engagement activities and report this to the management committee
- Focus on the policy change we are seeking rather than endorsing or disendorsing a particular view or candidate
- Practice respect, civility, boundaries and professionalism
- Maintain a conflict of interest register for staff and the management committee
- When situations arise, they are actively managed to reduce risk
- Actively brief the governing body on strategic engagement plans and activities
- Guide staff about differentiating their role at Q Shelter from private political activities

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- Introduce risk mitigation strategies to the risk register relating to compliance with ACNC requirements.

5.6 More information

The ACNC has a lot of information on advocacy for charities: <https://www.acnc.gov.au/tools/topic-guides/advocacy>. The ACNC also has guidance on [campaigning](#) as a charity.

6. Conclusion and staying in touch

This kit offers information and a compilation of resources on undertaking strategic engagement and advocacy to address housing needs and homelessness. The scope of our efforts to influence policy and investment will depend on many factors including the time and resources available, your organisation's purpose and the scale of the challenge involved.

Above all, this resource presents strategic engagement and advocacy as a repertoire. There are choices to be made about what to do, and how.

Q Shelter has an ongoing role in developing and advocating policy and investment solutions. We invite you to engage with this resource and stay in touch if you have questions or feedback on how we can improve these resources in the future.

You can contact Q Shelter at info@gshelter.asn.au or on 07 3831 5900.

Appendix 1: Tools and resources

1. Understanding the levels of government

Australia has three tiers of government: federal, state and local.

- The Federal Government. Its roles and responsibilities are defined in the Constitution and include things like income support, migration, tax and defence.
- The Queensland State Government. Its roles and responsibilities are also defined in the Constitution and includes many areas important to people and their wellbeing including education, health, primary industries, community services, housing, police services and others.
- Local governments. Their roles and responsibilities are defined in legislation created by the state government. This includes things like planning, local roads and rubbish disposal.

Queensland Government has produced an informative fact sheet about the three levels of Government in Australia. It defines the scope of each level of government and what each level of government is responsible for. [You can access this fact sheet here.](#)

2. Understanding Queensland Parliament

Queensland Government maintains a comprehensive web page explaining how the Parliament operates, its structure and legal basis.

These links are particularly relevant to the processes of advocacy and are worth becoming familiar with:

A Day in the Life of Queensland Parliament
The Executive Government of Queensland
The Queensland Parliament and Parliamentary Process
Officers of the Queensland Parliament
Parliamentary Committees

It is a testament to the strength of our democracy that Queensland Parliament publishes information on how you can have your say. There is information on how to make submissions, how to create or be involved in a petition, and how to contact your local member. You can consult these resources to help with your advocacy planning.

- [Have your say](#)

3. Your electorate and elected members

You can find out your electorate by searching an address at through the Electoral Commission of Queensland.

[Where is my electorate?](#)

You can search for your current elected representative at the Queensland Parliament website:

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[Directory of State MPs](#) including a contact list for all Ministers, Assistance Ministers and Shadow Ministers

4. Momentum on existing policies and plans

Q Shelter considers it important to affirm support for these policy statements and plans. Momentum is critically important to the future:

- [Homes for Queenslanders](#)
- [The Queensland Housing Summit Report](#)
- [Our Place](#)
- [Partnering for Inclusive Housing](#)
- [Towards ending homelessness for young Queenslanders](#)
- [Putting Queensland Kids First.](#)

5. Writing a letter

Writing a letter to your elected representative, or the relevant Minister can be helpful in formalising your concerns and presenting solutions. This letter could:

- A clear subject line
- Introduction of yourself, organisation and / or group
- Acknowledgement of the policy context and work that is already underway
- An outline of your issue including evidence of need (briefly in the letter or as an attachment)
- Proposed solutions
- Request for a meeting
- Invitation to visit
- Clear contact details
- Statement of appreciation for engaging with your concerns.

A few other suggestions for writing a good letter:

- Use headings to highlight your key messages
- Have a clear early statement about your purpose for writing
- Be as succinct as possible.

6. Hosting a meeting with your elected representative

It is well known that elected representatives have many demands on their time. Preparing for a meeting needs to be focused on achieving the intended purpose.

The following might help with planning:

- Use your stakeholder analysis to be clear about the concerns and interests of the person you are visiting
- Understand and consider their sphere of influence
- Have an agenda with times allocated for you and your team to follow
- Have a statement or cheat sheet with very clear and key messages: what do you most want to convey
- Be clear about the allocated time and plan for how to that time.
- If you are visiting in a delegation, agree on roles, key messages and how to ensure the most important points are made early

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- Ask the person what they are concerned about and engage about how those concerns might be addressed
- Always leave enough time for the person to respond and discuss their concerns or ideas about solutions
- Take notes and agree to any follow-up actions
- Always deliver any follow-up actions you have agreed to
- Write an acknowledgement email with thanks and any other information offered or provided.

7. Engaging the media

7.1 Building relationships with the media

The media is an important vehicle for raising awareness and amplifying the solutions you are seeking to achieve.

It is important to invest in building relationships with the media to ensure that you have raised your profile, outlined your purpose and scope as an organisation or alliance, and made it easy for contact to be made on an issue related to your purpose.

This can include:

- Analysing key media contacts and researching which journalists cover the issues you are interested in
- Taking notice of how issues you are concerned with are covered
- Meeting proactively with key media contacts to establish a dialogue and present how you can assist them in covering important topics
- Develop a media kit that includes your organisational profile, a media release or a media alert and any supporting research or data that will help media professionals to analyse the issue and solutions.

A key message is to be proactive rather than reactive so that you have built key relationships ahead of specific campaigns.

7.2 Writing a media alert or release

Raising community awareness about the solutions you are working towards helps to achieve influence. Broader community support is a way to strengthen connections to decision-makers and ensure they know their constituency cares about the issues and their solutions.

One starting point is to write a media release. Media Releases convey a clear outline of the challenges and solutions. They may include some data as evidence, and direct quotes about what would make the most difference.

Below are some helpful tips:

- Capture attention with an impactful headline
- Include your most important point in the first paragraph
- Use quotes from your official spokesperson to make it feel personal and human
- Keep it short (one to two pages)
- Provide a reference source for your evidence and data
- Include contact details for follow-up quotes or clarification.

You might also write a media alert ahead of events such as report launches, community events or forums. Media alerts will highlight what the upcoming event or launch is, when the information will be available,

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whether there is an embargo, and who to contact for more information. Media Alerts can also provide information about a media event where media can attend.