



**KATE SULLIVAN & ASSOCIATES PTY LIMITED**

## **ATSIC ADVOCACY GUIDE**

*for* **COMMISSIONERS AND COUNCILLORS**

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24 Waterview Street  
Balmain NSW 2041  
Phone (02) 9810 5755  
Fax (02) 9818 4528  
[ksaco@bigpond.com](mailto:ksaco@bigpond.com)  
ABN 84 068 814 951

## Contents

<b>ATSIC and Advocacy .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Basic Principles of Advocacy .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1. Have a plan .....	2
2. Know who you are representing .....	3
3. Be clear about what you want and be consistent in your message.....	3
4. Be positive .....	4
5. Know who it is you want to influence .....	4
6. Develop partnerships .....	5
7. Build long-term relationships .....	6
8. Take advantage of opportunities.....	6
9. Be persistent, tenacious and hardworking – it’s a long-term job.....	7
10. Know when to change your approach.....	7
<b>Putting advocacy to work.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Starting the advocacy campaign.....	8
Campaigning in a hostile environment.....	9
Targeting your Advocacy .....	10
Meetings and delegations .....	11
Planning a Media Strategy.....	12
Letter Writing Campaigns .....	14
Circulating information to supporters.....	15
Conclusion.....	15

## Appendices

**Wall chart/leaflet**

**Mindmap**

## **ATSIC AND ADVOCACY**

ATSIC is the peak advocacy body for Indigenous peoples.

Effective advocacy means winning public and political support, influencing decision-makers and negotiating to bring about change which will enhance the rights and well-being of Indigenous peoples.

As an ATSIC Commissioner, Regional Council Chair or Councillor, you have a role to speak up for and negotiate for the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Whether your aim is to advocate for Indigenous peoples at local, state or national level, an effective advocate builds relationships with people who have the power to make decisions and the changes you want.

Advocacy involves building relationships within your own community, and with other people and organisations who may support you in your goals. It can be used to:

- ❑ influence Governments
- ❑ initiate policy development (to change behaviour or increase funding)
- ❑ respond to policy initiatives
- ❑ influence change
- ❑ develop partnerships

This guide explains ten key principles of successful advocacy, and how you can put them to work.

## **BASIC PRINCIPLES OF ADVOCACY**

- 1. Have a plan**
- 2. Know who you are representing**
- 3. Be clear about what you want and be consistent in your message**
- 4. Be positive**
- 5. Know who you want to influence – identify and research your target**
- 6. Develop partnerships with allies**
- 7. Build relationships and lines of communication with key people (eg media)**
- 8. Take advantage of opportunities**
- 9. Be persistent, tenacious and hardworking – it is a long-term job**
- 10. Know when to change your approach**

### **1. HAVE A PLAN**

Get together with your Indigenous colleagues and key allies and work through or talk about the issues:

- Know the issue and what outcomes you want to achieve
- Use existing plans and strategies to assist you
- Identify who can deliver what you want
- Identify how you can influence the people who can give you what you want
- Develop a plan for approaching these people
  - Who can actually make the changes you want?
  - Who can give you support on this issue?
  - Who can help publicise or promote your position?
- Identify who is likely to oppose you and what their position will be?
  - How can their objections be answered?
  - How can our message be put so that it counter-balances opposition?
- Do you need a media strategy?
- Are there timing issues?
  - When should you take the actions you've planned?

## 2. **KNOW WHO YOU ARE REPRESENTING**

- Are you representing your community?
- Does your community understand and agree with what you are saying and doing?
- Does your community support you?
- Which organisations and supporters are you working with?
- How will you keep everyone informed?

## 3. **BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT AND BE CONSISTENT IN YOUR MESSAGE**

### **Understand the issue or problem**

The problem may be an enormous one or a small one.

- What is your issue?
- Is it an issue that needs to be solved one step at a time?
- What are the steps?

### **Work out the solution**

What changes are you trying to bring about?

- Changes in policy?
- More funds?
- Are you trying to change behaviour?
- What ATSI policy or program could be developed or used to resolve the issue?

If the problem needs to be solved one step at a time, each step is part of the solution. What are your short term and long term goals?

*For example, if you want to change a policy, is the first step getting representation on the body that makes the decisions?*

### **Summarise your position**

- Collect the facts
- Prepare a summary
- Document your position

### **Keep the message consistent**

- Simple summaries of your position that everyone can use are essential
- When you adopt a position, maintain it consistently

- ❑ Ensure that all those who speak for you about these issues are sending the same message

### **Don't sell yourself short or settle for less than you want**

- ❑ Stand your ground
- ❑ You may be offered something that isn't what you really want – when this happens continue to negotiate your position

## **4. BE POSITIVE**

- ❑ It is much easier to sell solutions than problems.
- ❑ Remember, advocacy is about negotiation, not confrontation.

If you use a negative to illustrate your problem, make sure you have a strong positive solution and **show** how your solution will help solve the problem.

## **5. KNOW WHO IT IS YOU WANT TO INFLUENCE**

- ❑ Who are they? – which organisations, interest groups, political parties, State, Local or Federal Governments?
- ❑ What will work with them?
- ❑ What are their beliefs, their interests and their aims?
- ❑ How do they operate? What is their power structure?
- ❑ Who can help you make the right contacts?
- ❑ Who will know these things and how can you find out?

### **Identify and research your target**

#### ***Analyse other viewpoints***

- ❑ 'Map' your environment
  - where is there common ground or common goals?
  - where is opposition likely to come from?
- ❑ What positions are opponents likely to take?
  - Will you be trying to change their viewpoint?
  - Is there a way we can cover their concerns in our arguments? Can we allay their fears?
  - How can we overcome their objections and advance our position
- ❑ What do others have to gain or lose – how does it affect us?

### ***Analyse the electorate, region or community***

Think about your community or region. Where will you find opposition or support? To influence your lobbying targets, do you first need to influence other people or organisations? Who? Are some of them potential allies?

Develop an inventory of people from whom you might receive support, such as:

- Other Indigenous organisations
- Local Government, State Government Departments, politicians
- Political parties, independents
- Local industries and their representative bodies – eg. Pastoralists and Graziers Association
- Interest groups
- Church groups and leaders
- Entertainers and sportspeople
- Youth leaders, ethnic community leaders, Indigenous elders
- Social welfare groups
- Local women's organisations
- Nature conservation groups
- Professional associations (doctors, lawyers etc)
- Chambers of Commerce
- Service clubs eg Rotary
- Reconciliation groups and supporters

### ***Decide:***

- Who your advocacy should directly target
- Who to form alliances with
- Who can help you influence the target group?

## **6. DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS**

- Join with other people / groups who share your position
- Explain the benefits of the partnership
- Look for common experiences and ways to relate
- Be clear about what you want and what you want them to do
- Manage support strategically

- Suggest actions their members or supporters can take – letter, writing, phoning, talk-back radio, distributing information, mail-outs, running information stalls
- Once people have offered support, step back and let them get on with it
- Give your supporters feedback (information about what is happening, progress made) and recognition for their support and efforts)
- Consider going into short-term partnerships in order to achieve a specific goal
  - Work with what you have in common
  - Put differences aside to work towards a common goal

## **7. BUILD LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS**

Effective advocacy involves building long-term relationships and lines of communication with

- the people or organisations that you want to influence
- others who are in key positions – such as media representatives, Shire Clerk, people in political parties, Government departments or Ministerial advisers
- people who might oppose you

Have something to offer in return, such as

- contacts
- information
- introductions

## **8. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES**

- An election offers a prime opportunity to get your issues on the agenda.

Other opportunities include:

- Accepting invitations
- Attending functions
- Keep up to date with current developments
- Making submissions to Commissions of Inquiry
- Making submissions to Parliamentary Hearings
- International events and visitors

Use a variety of approaches – decide what will work in your community:



- ❑ A sporting or cultural event
- ❑ A big community meeting
- ❑ A fundraising event
- ❑ Local media

**9. BE PERSISTENT, TENACIOUS AND HARDWORKING – IT’S A LONG-TERM JOB**

Advocacy can bring about change in the long term – it takes time and consistent effort

- ❑ Results may be slow in coming
- ❑ Change is often the result of small, incremental achievements
- ❑ If people are not interested or are hostile
  - Focus on the strength of your case
  - Draw attention to its relevance to them
  - Focus on how much support you have in the wider community

**10. KNOW WHEN TO CHANGE YOUR APPROACH**

- ❑ If you are not getting anywhere, go back to your plan and re-think the strategy
  - What could you do differently or better?
  - Is your community still behind you?
  - Have the circumstances changed?
  - Have you focussed on the right people?
  - Is the message effective – if not, why not?
  - Is your media strategy working?
  - Why didn’t the plan have the impact you intended? Was the timing right?

## **PUTTING ADVOCACY TO WORK**

Your planning session has:

- ❑ analysed the situation
- ❑ developed a plan or a strategy.

Now you need to start thinking about:

- ❑ how to put your plan into action
- ❑ using the ten key points of successful advocacy.

## **STARTING THE ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN**

The more time people have to get used to a change or a new idea, and the more they feel they are included in decisions, the more accepting and supportive they will be.

- ❑ Begin early – the sooner you can start getting your message out the better
- ❑ Take a broad approach – try to reach all parts of the general community

Decide:

- ❑ If the issue you are concerned about a local, State or Commonwealth Government issue?
- ❑ Who do you need to influence to bring about change?

Your strategy needs to cover:

- ❑ Getting the timing right – for example election cycles and policy or budget cycles
- ❑ Different approaches for different political parties
  - Find out how parties decide policy (Conferences, Branches, Individuals)
  - What is their general approach to your issue
  - Find ‘sponsors’ - who can help you to get to the people or structures that decide policy
- ❑ Different approaches in different States and regions
  - The more remote the electorate the more likely the politician is to focus on local issues
  - Regional politicians are likely to concentrate on the people they regard as their ‘natural constituency’ and act accordingly, rather than take a “whole of community” perspective.

## **CAMPAIGNING IN A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT**

Many people will be hostile to your advocacy for change.

- ❑ Working in a hostile environment is difficult.
- ❑ In some areas race issues and community differences are deliberately exploited for political advantage.

Hostility is predictable, but manageable.

### **Identify**

- ❑ Communication problems
- ❑ Differences in objectives
- ❑ Differences in approaches
- ❑ Historical barriers to change

### **Meet on neutral ground**

- ❑ Acknowledge other viewpoints
- ❑ Try to disarm hostility - respond clearly and directly to the other side's arguments
- ❑ Show how your solution can be in their interest
- ❑ Try to build a consensus on a positive future outcome.

### **Explain the issues on an individual level**

- ❑ explain how the problem affects real people
- ❑ explore the costs and benefits of your solution to all parties
- ❑ explain the consequences of not taking action
- ❑ identify ways to open negotiations

### **Assert your place in the community**

- ❑ take opportunities to speak up
- ❑ avoid behaving in an angry or aggressive way – advocacy is about negotiation, not confrontation
- ❑ social justice is an issue for everyone

### **Gather support**

- ❑ from influential third parties who are respected by the broader community
- ❑ try not to give your opponents too many opportunities to isolate you or turn you into 'the enemy'
- ❑ Independent facts help – get an independent person to research the issue or quote information that comes from an independent source

## TARGETING YOUR ADVOCACY

One obvious focus for advocacy about the rights of Indigenous peoples is Government.

Even if your political representatives seem unsympathetic, your group can have a lot of influence over political candidates and local members, especially in areas where Indigenous people are a large proportion of the electors.

- ❑ Develop a direct relationship with your local member
- ❑ Develop direct relationships with political parties – members, officials, candidates
- ❑ Develop relationships with Ministers and Shadow Ministers (Opposition spokespersons) and their advisers
- ❑ Don't just barrack for one team! Develop relationships with all sides of politics. Aim to increase the knowledge of all parties and gain bi-partisan support
- ❑ Backbenchers of all parties can be useful allies
- ❑ Remember that the Opposition is the Government-in-waiting!

Advocacy can also target:

- ❑ Organisations
- ❑ Companies or corporations

### Support from others

You may need to gain the support of third parties to support your advocacy:

- ❑ Local councillors are important local people who are already likely to have relationships with local and regional businesses, State and Federal members of parliament etc. They can be useful sources of information and useful allies. ATSIC's Guide *How to Get Elected to Local Government* may help here!
- ❑ State level support may be useful if pursuing a national issue, and vice versa.
- ❑ You may find that many organisations or individuals are willing to support you on particular issues – for example
  - Ministers of religion, leaders of local Churches and faith groups
  - Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Mines
  - Rotary clubs and other community service organisations
  - Trade Unions
  - Professional associations – lawyers, accountants, etc

- Farming industry associations and their representative bodies – graingrowers, pastoralists, dairy, forest, sugar industry etc. (which ones are important in your region?)
- Local Country Women’s Association (CWA)
- Local mining companies and executives
- Football league
- Entertainers and artists
- Tourist industry
- Greening Australian, Landcare groups, cultural heritage protection groups eg ICOMOS, National Trust
- Division of General Practise (ie GPs)
- Reconciliation Councils and groups, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation Groups

## **MEETINGS AND DELEGATIONS**

### **Prepare for meetings**

Good preparation for meetings is essential.

- Know what the position of other stakeholders is likely to be and be ready with
  - Responses to their objections
  - A strong case that shows how your solutions incorporate or address their concerns
- Practice. Do some ‘role- plays’ – get someone to play the politician and his/her advisers. Try to work out what the objections to your position might be and cover them before they are raised, or be ready to respond.
- Choose a delegation of two or three people – a mixture of good speakers and people of standing in your community
- Visit members of parliament in their electoral offices when possible as they have more time and are more relaxed.

### **Meeting Strategy**

- Be clear about who you are meeting and why. Make sure you understand their role and status – where do they fit in?
- Go to the meeting with a clear plan about what you will say and do. Work out beforehand who will say what.
- Plan to use the time well – if you only have twenty minutes, get to the point quickly but politely.

- ❑ Dress and act in a way that's appropriate for the place and person you are meeting with
- ❑ Take briefing material and leave a short summary or briefing paper that has your contact details

### **Follow up**

Meeting follow up is essential. Write a note to the person you met with, outlining what was discussed and agreed, and confirming future actions.

## **PLANNING A MEDIA STRATEGY**

Work with ATSIIC's media officers to get advice and help.

It's important to think through the possible results of trying to get media coverage. Here are some questions to think over:

- ❑ Will going to the media improve your profile or help the campaign? How?
- ❑ Could your message be misinterpreted? Could this hurt your campaign?
- ❑ Is there agreement in the Indigenous community? Do they know about this? Will some people be offended or give a conflicting view to the media?
- ❑ Are there likely to be negative or hostile comments? Can you answer these in advance?
- ❑ Are there other organisations or people who would support your position in the media? Can you work cooperatively with these people so there is more than one voice putting your position?

In some cases you might get better results if you get on with your lobbying quietly and leave the media until later – for example if you're trying to negotiate about a sensitive issue, it could be better to wait until you have agreement and all the parties are ready to go to the media together to announce the solution.

### **Prepare**

- ❑ Put together media lists with names, phone & fax numbers
- ❑ program the list onto a 'one-touch' fax number – this will save much time and work when you want to get out a press statement
- ❑ If you are working with other organisations or people, agree in advance about what you will say to the media so the message is always consistent.
- ❑ Develop personal contacts with key people – editors, chiefs of staff, reporters and journalists. Build trust by being honest, giving accurate information and keeping appointments.

- ❑ Get to know these people – invite them for general briefings, let them know in advance if a story they might be interested in is coming up. Put in the spadework early and it will pay off later because they know you and what you're trying to achieve.

### **Be clear about the message**

- ❑ Think about who you are trying to reach and how you can get your message across.
- ❑ Prepare written background information – journalists need briefing material and will use it if it is clear and accurate.
- ❑ Be consistent in your message – every media comment should reinforce the same message
- ❑ Make the message positive. The reason for your campaign is that something is wrong – your briefing material probably includes some terrible statistics. That's the bad news. The good news is the solution you are trying to win so that everyone will benefit.
- ❑ Try not to put too many ideas across – one or two simple messages repeated often will be much more effective.

### **Getting the message across**

- ❑ Don't just 'preach to the converted'. Aim for the broadest audience. Who are you trying to reach? What newspapers do they read? What TV do they watch? Which radio station do they listen to?
- ❑ Don't forget the 'serious' media – like the ABC. At first they might be the only ones who will cover your story and give you a fair go. In the country they often reach most of the community.

### **Be cautious**

The media looks for different opinions to achieve balance for their stories

- ❑ think about the possible responses in advance
- ❑ answer your critics right at the beginning.
- ❑ Remember you can say 'no' – you don't have to buy in to an argument.
- ❑ Remember that sometimes people are misquoted – you could be reacting to a 'beatup'

### **Other media tools and strategies**

- ❑ Press releases. Consider the following:
  - Newsworthiness
  - Timing

- Content
- Essential details, including heading ('Media Release'), date, contact details
- Available spokesperson
- Radio talk-back – you can phone in and raise issues, respond to other callers, and 'roster' people to listen and phone in.
- Letters to the Editor
 

Letters to the editor should be short and to the point. A long letter will not be published or will be edited (possibly with disastrous results).

  - Write yourself in your role as an elected ATSIIC office-holder
  - Encourage prominent and well respected third parties to write
  - 'Orchestrate' a flood of letters from supporters – provide them with your briefing materials and arguments
- Opinion/Editorial pieces
 

These are longer, thoughtful articles which can be written by

  - you in your role as an ATSIIC office-holder,
  - by appropriate, sympathetic third parties (such as academics, local councillors, CEOs or office holders of bodies that have influence in the community)
- Organise media 'events' and generate coverage for your issue.
 

Media 'events' can include a range of activities and opportunities, for example:

  - Press conference
  - An opening or a launch – for example opening a new building, launching a book, opening an exhibition, holding a cultural or sporting event, starting a campaign
  - Events – invite people who have a local or media profile as 'drawcards'
  - Include elements that will be of interest to journalists and the public – performers or high profile people that will attract photographers; a focal point for a ceremony, objects and 'props', effective speakers etc.

## **LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGNS**

Provide your supporters with lists of people (names and addresses) of people you would like them to write to about your issues. These may be State, local or Commonwealth politicians, Ministers or Department heads or policy staff. You can provide a form letter to which people only have to add their name and



address – but it is generally better if people write their own. Both can be effective if there are enough of them.

### **CIRCULATING INFORMATION TO SUPPORTERS**

- ❑ Develop simple summaries of events and issues and circulate them
- ❑ Develop e-mail lists and fax streams to circulate information and provide feedback
- ❑ See whether someone can help you set up a website to
  - update issues
  - file press releases
  - post a calendar of planned events

### **CONCLUSION**

Advocacy takes time. Results might be slow in coming and they may come in small bites. Changes that may seem to have been won easily are often based on small incremental achievements and relationships that have been built up over years of effort.

Constantly refer to your plan, review it and update it. Circumstances change. Identify *now* what you can do to bring about change in the future.

Always aim to

- ❑ Act in a manner which is culturally appropriate
- ❑ Respect and value diversity
- ❑ Act with integrity, honesty and transparency
- ❑ Be accountable to the people you represent
- ❑ Uphold the principles and values of social justice

## ADVOCACY

<p><b>1. Have a plan</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>Who</b></li> <li>◆ <b>What</b></li> <li>◆ <b>Where</b></li> <li>◆ <b>When</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Do a 'SWOT':</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Strengths</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Weaknesses</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Opportunities</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Threats</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Know who you are representing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>Identify your support</b></li> <li>◆ <b>Bring the community with you</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. Be clear about what you want and be consistent in your message</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>What is your issue?</b></li> <li>◆ <b>What do you want?</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>4. Be positive</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>Talk solutions not problems</b></li> <li>◆ <b>Negotiation, not confrontation</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>5. Know who you want to influence – identify and research your target</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>Who do you need to talk to?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Government?</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Non-Government?</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ <b>What do others believe?</b></li> <li>◆ <b>What will convince others?</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>6. Develop partnerships with allies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>What are the benefits to them?</b></li> <li>◆ <b>What do you want people to do?</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>7. Build relationships and lines of communication with key people</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>People who might support you</b></li> <li>◆ <b>People who might oppose you</b></li> <li>◆ <b>People who might be useful</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>8. Take advantage of opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>Use the media</b></li> <li>◆ <b>Attend functions</b></li> <li>◆ <b>Talk to people</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>9. Be persistent, tenacious and hardworking</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>It's a long-term job</b></li> <li>◆ <b>Every gain is progress</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>10. Know when to change your approach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>Review your plan regularly</b></li> </ul>	

