



Invite your local representatives to an event

Inviting your local Member of Parliament (MP) to an Early Learning Matters Week event (26-30 July 2021) can help demonstrate the value of early learning and education services. Meeting face-to-face with the early learning community is important for those who are elected to public office. The passion with which you set up your event will show your MP how much your staff and families value early childhood education.

For you, a visit from your MP can provide an opportunity to:

- strengthen your relationship with the local representative
- raise the profile of your event
- get photos and media coverage
- publicly demonstrate your MP's support for early childhood education.

Things to consider

- **Size:** How big would the event be? Larger events need more planning and resources.
- **Time and location:** What time and space suits your community the most? Ideally, host the event at your service during opening hours.
- **Who will help:** Do you need volunteers or donations for your event? Source these at the earliest.
- **Promotion:** How will you let people know about your event? Plan your channels in advance.
- **Speakers:** Who would speak officially at the event? Assign roles as soon as possible.

Decide what role your MP will be invited to take

What do you want your MP to do at your event? Requests could include asking them to meet with educators, read a story to children, take a tour of your service, make a short speech about early learning, join a discussion panel, present awards or acknowledgements to educators, or launch a new initiative.

Talk to your MP's staff

Give plenty of advance notice about your event, as MPs are often busy and away from their electorate (although Federal Parliament is not sitting during Early Learning Matters Week and they should be in their home electorates). The first step is to ring your MP's office, explain that you'd like to invite the MP to your event and ask about their availability on the proposed date. Then follow up with a written request with all of the appropriate details, including:

- aim of the event and activities planned
- date, time, location, duration and directions to the event
- estimated number of attendees and details of other invited guests
- details of a designated contact at your end
- information about the organisation(s) hosting the event.

Don't be disappointed if an advisor is sent in place of your MP. The advisor may become a very useful ally if you build a relationship with them.

Invite the local media and issue a pre-event media release

MPs welcome publicity, especially in their own electorates, but ask them if they are happy to have the media attend your event.

The best way to let the media know of your event is by sending them a media release via email, with a follow-up phone call. Contact details for your local newspaper or magazine can be found in the print version (usually on the first page or inside front cover).

If you need help inviting your MP or the local media, please email Early Childhood Australia (ECA) on EarlyLearningMatters@earlychildhood.org.au and we will be in touch.

On the day of the event

Meet and greet your MP

Schedule a meet-and-greet session for your MP at an appropriate time (e.g. before the official start of the event if they are opening it) and allow time for introductions. Make sure they know the order of the event and where they slot in.

Introduce your MP

At the start of the event, give a brief explanation of why the MP is there. It may also be helpful to announce whether or not there will be a question-and-answer (Q&A) round later.

Take lots of photos

Organise for someone at the event to take good-quality photos that you can use for your own communications and share with the media as well as ECA. Your MP's staff may also take photos for their own communications. When taking photos that include members of the public, make sure you ask for their permission, especially if children are present. It's a good idea to ask before you take the photo and explain how you would like to use it. You may also like to record some quotes from attendees at your event.

After the event

Consider sending a post-event media release

Local media thrives on stories of community events and activities. Send photos and a media release with details of what happened at the event, who was there and what your MP and others said. Be sure to highlight key information about the issue.

Thank your MP

Send a letter or card to your MP, thanking them for their participation. Include any follow-up information you may have promised them.

Let ECA know what happened

We want to know if your MP attended an event at your service. Please tell us! To help inspire others, send us photos of your event so we can upload them to the Early Learning Matters Week website and Facebook page. Email us the photos and details on EarlyLearningMatters@earlychildhood.org.au. This will also help us track the MPs who support early learning and target them better.

If you will be posting your photos and event details on social media, please use the hashtags **#EarlyLearningMattersWeek** and **#EarlyLearningMatters**.

Sample run-sheets

1. Centre visit during operating hours

Time	Activity	Opportunities
10.00 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MP arrives at the service and is greeted by the service manager Sign-in and COVID-prevention steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service manager provides overview of service—number of families, children and educators
10.05 am–10.30 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service manager escorts MP on a walk-through of the service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss play and learning, planning and educator role
10.30 am–10.45 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MP joins activities with children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photos of children’s engagement with MP
10.45 am– 11.00 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MP meets with service manager and educator(s) to discuss the importance of early learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share key issues—concerns and achievements—with the MP
11.00 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MP departs the service 	

2. Network meeting: Evening gathering of local MP and educators from a number of services

Time	Activity	Opportunities
6.00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MP arrives at host service and is greeted by the organiser Sign-in and COVID-prevention steps 	
6.00 pm–6.45 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MP meets with educators and shares views on importance of early learning Q&A session Educators share their experiences, issues and achievements as well as information about Early Learning Matters Week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss play and learning, planning and educator role Share key issues—concerns and achievements—with the MP
6.45 pm–7.00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrap-up and discussion about other opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build relationship and ask for the MP’s support on key issues
7.00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network meeting ends 	