



# DRUMMING UP SUPPORT

## 1. Why you need support from others

In order to successfully meet your goals or campaign objectives, you will need support from others in the community. This can be about partnering with others, getting help from people who can lend or give you resources, skills, public statements of support or funding to help your group achieve more than what it can achieve on its own.

Governments of all varieties tend to take notice of groups that have a broad, influential group of supporters, even if they only have a few members.

You can start the process of involving and influencing by thinking about three broad groups of people:

1. Those who are probably already broadly supportive of your vision, and can provide help or support.
2. Those who are unaware of your vision, or don't yet share it, but could be persuaded of its benefits and convinced to help or support you.
3. Those who would disagree with your vision, and might actively work against you.

## 2. Finding supporters

Supporters can be individuals, or groups (eg. walking clubs or environmental groups) in the area who would happily support your cause. They might even join in with you to see it achieved. Or, there might be a high-profile, influential person in the area, who you believe would be sympathetic to your cause.

It is also useful to think about the different sorts of support people and groups can offer, including:

- time and effort.
- endorsement or support without active involvement.
- contacts (like contacts in the media or in local Government).
- goods or services.
- knowledge or skills.

Once you've got a list of who might help and how, you can think about how you're going to reach them.



### 3. Creating supporters

On the face of it, some people might not seem like allies. For example, given the regular furore traders and local governments have about parking, traders might not seem all that likely to support initiatives that encourage walking. But they might if they knew about the research that says people who walk to the shops make more trips and spend more money locally than people who drive!

When working out who you need to persuade, you'll need to think about:

- What they're interested in or motivated by, and how your cause could help (like creating more trade for local businesses, or helping a local councillor get re-elected).
- What you want them to do: get actively involved; offer a letter of endorsement or support; give you money; or just be aware of what you're trying to do?
- Why they might resist your message, and how you might (gently!) overcome that resistance
- How you're going to reach them.

Remember that media, and decision-makers and funding-bodies like local and state government will often fall into this 'persuadable' category – so have a look at our information on engaging government.

### 4. Reaching supporters

Now that you've worked out from whom you want to get to support you need to decide how to reach them. You can think about:

- Using your networks: does someone in the group also belong to another group, or know someone with influence in your community.
- Inviting your potential supporter to one of your meetings.
- Asking to be invited to a potential partner group's meetings.

You can also write letters, and use the media to drum up support. If you decide to write some letters seeking support, make sure you include:

- A brief overview of your group and its vision or goals.
- Why you think the person or group might be sympathetic to your view.
- What you think they could contribute: such as endorsement, support, funding, and goods or services.
- Next steps – whether you want them to get in contact with you, or whether you plan to follow up the letter with a phone call.
- Your contact details.

Remember that tone is critical in written communications – it is better to be too formal than too casual, even if you already know the person or group you're writing too. And be careful not to seem presumptuous: indicate that you would be grateful for any support that they can offer.

## 5. Overcoming critics

It's a sad truth that not everybody values walking as much as we do. Often, critics have a different view of how resources should be spent.

Creating walking-friendly neighbourhoods will cost money and resources, which other people might think could be better spent on other things. So, it can help to ask yourself

- Who might be disadvantaged if walking increased (car-parking companies, for a silly example)?
- Who else is competing for the resources you would like to see allocated to encouraging walking?

If you can answer those two questions, you probably have 90 per cent of your critics listed! But the task isn't quite done yet.

One of the best ways to overcome criticism is to have your response ready, well before you need it. So, spend some time thinking about what arguments your critics might use to undermine your case, and how you might counter those arguments.

While you're doing that, keep the image you want to project uppermost in your mind. Emotional arguments and putdowns between opponents might be good media fodder, but they don't do your credibility any good, and they may put some people off working with you.

Instead, when dealing with your critics, remain calm, pleasant and fair. Stick to the facts, tell your story, and don't be drawn into a slanging match – directly or through the media.

## Letter to supporters

Neighbourhood Walks  
PO Box 99  
Neighbourhood VIC 3333  
[www.neighbourhoodwalks.org.au](http://www.neighbourhoodwalks.org.au)

Dear [Name],

We thought you might be interested in hearing about the great progress we've made recently in our question to make Neighbourhood more walkable.

We surveyed 500 people over four days at the Main Street shops, and discovered that more than 75 per cent of shoppers live within 1km. As a result, we'll soon be starting a campaign to encourage local people to walk, instead of drive, to the shops.

Councillor Friend has agreed to present and support our case for installing a signal-controlled pedestrian crossing at the corner of Main and Minor Streets. Council will vote on the proposal on 25 November, so keep your fingers crossed!

Neighbourhood Public School has reported a major drop in the number of cars outside the school at pick up and drop off – and an increase in children walking to school as a result of our 'Walk to School' program. These results contributed to St Mary's agreeing to join the Walk to School program early in the next school year.

Even though we've had some great successes, we could still use your help. Here are some of the ways you might be able to contribute.

- Join us! We could always use more helping hands, so that we can increase the pace of change towards making Neighbourhood more walking-friendly.
- Donate! Whether you would like to make a cash donation, or contribute some goods or services we could use to encourage walking (like printing or prizes for our regular fundraising raffles), we'd very happily accept anything you could offer – and of course, promote your contribution on our website, in our newsletter, and in other marketing.
- Tell your friends! Even if you have no time or resources to spare at the moment, telling other people about the great things we're achieving will help us build our support base – and might even net us another volunteer.

If you'd like to know more about the current Neighbourhood Walks projects we'd be more than happy to take you on a tour or sit down and tell you about what we're achieving.

You can reach us through our website ([www.neighbourhoodwalks.org.au](http://www.neighbourhoodwalks.org.au)) or call the Chair, John Walker on 03 9999 9999.

Yours sincerely,  
Neighbourhood Walks

[www.victoriawalks.org.au](http://www.victoriawalks.org.au)