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Preparing for the next Federal Budget: Advocacy Guide 2026

The Post Federal Budget special: Practical guide for companies and organisations

August 2026

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The Federal Budget

This year's federal budget was handed down on **12 May 2026**, indicating the next is expected to be handed down on **11 May 2027.**

For advocacy organisations, the Budget process provides an opportunity to engage with Government, Opposition, crossbench parliamentarians and relevant departments to ensure that community needs, human rights and sector priorities are reflected in future policy and funding decisions. This engagement is particularly important in the period following the Budget, when organisations can assess the measures announced, identify gaps or unintended consequences, and **begin advocating for changes to future Budgets and policy settings.**

- **For the Government**, the Budget and subsequent implementation process provide opportunities to influence how commitments are designed, funded and delivered. Engagement with ministers, government backbenchers and relevant departments can help ensure that policy responses are informed by evidence and the lived experience of affected communities.
- **For the Opposition and crossbench**, the Budget provides an opportunity to identify gaps in Government policy and develop alternative proposals. Advocacy organisations can contribute evidence, policy expertise and community perspectives to the opposition that may inform alternative approaches and future election commitments. This is pertinent in this budget period as a federal election is expected to be happening next year.
- **For the sector more broadly**, the period between Budgets and ahead of the next federal election provides an opportunity to inform policy priorities, build cross-sector coalitions and secure commitments from political parties. This can help ensure that issues affecting communities are not solely recognised in the political debate, but are translated into concrete policy and funding commitments.

The current economic climate

Australia's economic environment remains cautious, with interest rates and inflation continuing to place pressure on households, businesses and government spending.

The RBA cash rate is currently 4.35%, following three increases earlier in the year, while inflation is forecast to remain above the RBA's target range until late 2027. At the same time, economic growth is slowing and the labour market is beginning to soften. **This creates a tight fiscal environment in which new spending proposals are likely to face greater scrutiny and need to demonstrate clear value and measurable impact.**

Alongside these pressures, the Government's broader economic reform agenda is focused heavily on improving productivity and reducing barriers to growth including measures such as tariff reductions, changes to regulation and approval processes, and investment in AI and data centres. Tax reform also appears to be back on the policy agenda, although it remains at an early stage.

For organisations developing pre-budget submissions, this context creates an opportunity to position proposals around how investment can address these government priorities to improve productivity, reduce pressure elsewhere in the system, remove unnecessary red tape or support broader economic participation. **Framing an ask in these terms may make it more compelling in the current economic climate.**

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Use this guidebook as a live planning tool. Capture your first thoughts, test them, refine them and turn them into a practical government engagement plan for your organisation.

1. Audit & stakeholder mapping

Every year, government receives a large number of pre-budget submissions from community organisations, peak bodies, businesses and other stakeholders. A good submission matters, but in order to stand out from the other organisations also seeking funding, action needs to happen beforehand to make sure your organisation and your issue are already known.

Starting early gives you time to **build relationships, understand who has influence and create familiarity with your organisation.** It means your submission is not the first time a Minister, adviser or government official has heard of your work.

Start with an audit

Before you start building new relationships, look at the ones you already have.

Think about the politicians, advisers, government officials, sector organisations and other stakeholders your organisation has worked with. Who knows your organisation? Who have you spoken to recently? Who could help you progress your particular ask?

Ask yourself:

- Who already knows our organisation and our work?
- Who have we met with recently, and who have we lost touch with?
- Do we have relationships with Ministers, advisers or MPs that are relevant to our sector?
- Do we know anyone in the relevant government department?
- Which peak bodies or organisations could support our position?

Map priority stakeholders

Once you understand your existing relationships, map the people who could influence your ask.

Don't only focus on the most senior or obvious people. Ministers ultimately make the decisions, but advisers and departmental officials are closely involved in shaping the options and advice that reach them. A local MP can advocate for an issue within government, while a peak body may be able to demonstrate that your concern is shared across the sector.

For each stakeholder, consider **what role they could play, what matters to them and what you want from the relationship?**

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Who can you engage with?

Stakeholder	Why they matter	What they need to know	Engagement tactic
Minister of relevant portfolio	Political leadership and decision-making	The ask, the evidence and why it matters	Meeting, letter, briefing
Adviser/Staffer	Informs and manages Minister's priorities and advice	Short brief, clear options, confidence	Meeting, call, briefing
Government department	Develops policy and implementation advice	The problem, evidence and how the proposal could work	Consultation, meeting, briefing
Local Member	Can advocate for local issues and constituents	Local impact and clear examples	Site visit, local briefing
Peak body / partner	Can build broader support for your position	The shared issue and your proposed solution	Joint advocacy/campaign, meetings
Media	Can increase public attention and visibility	A clear story, evidence and human impact	Media pitch, opinion piece

Tips for connecting with parliamentarians

Elected representatives are highly attentive to constituent experiences, local sentiment and visible community impact. State-wide data can show scale. Local examples make the issue politically tangible.

The strongest advocacy often connects the two: state or system-level evidence, backed by local stories that show what the issue looks like in real life.

Relationship-building actions (recommended but not limited to):

- Invite local MPs and advisers to visit programs or community events.
- Share short updates on emerging community issues.
- Provide useful evidence without always asking for something.
- Participate constructively in consultations and reviews.
- Acknowledge government support positively where appropriate.
- Keep advisers informed about sector developments before they become problems.
- Follow up after meetings with concise, practical next steps.

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Start early: a checklist

Use the months before the pre-budget process to:

- ☐ **Audit** your existing relationships.
- ☐ **Map** the people who could influence your ask.
- ☐ **Identify** gaps in your network.
- ☐ **Prioritise** the relationships that matter most.
- ☐ **Re-engage** people you have lost touch with.
- ☐ **Build new relationships** before you need to make an ask.
- ☐ **Share useful information** and demonstrate your organisation's expertise.
- ☐ **Look for opportunities** to meet with relevant politicians, advisers and officials.
- ☐ **Use what you learn** from these conversations to refine your ask.

By the time the pre-budget submission process opens, you should know who you need to speak to — and, ideally, they should already know who you are.

2. Define your ask

A strong submission starts with a clear objective. Governments are balancing competing priorities, funding pressures and large volumes of information across multiple sectors. Your ask needs to help policymakers quickly understand:

- **The issue:** What is happening and why does it matter?
- **The people:** Who is affected, and how?
- **The consequences:** What will happen if nothing changes?
- **The solution:** What practical and achievable action could address the issue?
- **The impact:** What difference will government action make for communities and the broader system?

A strong submission should identify **what you want government to do, how it should be done, and what difference it will make.** Use the following activity to define the change you are seeking and develop the messaging that will support your submission.

Brainstorm your policy objective:

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Message element	Prompt	Notes
The issue	What is happening? What is the problem? *Note: Try to use plain language, your target audience may not be subject-matter-experts*	
The people	Who is affected by the issue and how?	
The evidence	What data, research or other evidence demonstrates the scale and significance of the issue?	
The consequences	What will happen if nothing changes? What costs or pressures will continue or increase?	
The solution	What practical, evidence-based and achievable action from government could address the issue?	
The ask	What specifically do you want government to do? If you are seeking funding, how much is required, over what period, and for what purpose?	
The impact	What will government investment or action achieve for communities and the broader system?	

3. Tailor your ask

Before developing your pre-budget submission, you should be able to show that you understand what the Government is trying to achieve and where your organisation fits into that picture. Before you start writing, look at the Government's current priorities and think about how your ask can contribute to them.

Speak their language

Pay attention to the issues the Government or your relevant Minister is already talking about — whether that is **productivity, cost of living, workforce participation, reducing pressure on services or cutting red tape**. Start with the outcome you want to help government achieve, then explain what investment or policy change is needed to make that happen.

For example, instead of: "We are seeking $5 million in additional funding for our program."

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You could frame it as: "A $5 million investment over four years will support increased workforce participation and reduce demand on other parts of the service system."

The funding request is **connected to an outcome** that matters to government.

Do your homework

Before drafting, spend some time looking at what the Government and relevant Ministers have been saying. Read recent **speeches, portfolio statements, budget documents, announcements and policy priorities**.

Think about:

- What does the Government say it is trying to achieve?
- What issues has the relevant Minister identified as priorities?
- Is there a genuine connection between those priorities and your work?
- How can you demonstrate that your proposal will help deliver on those priorities?

Take a moment to brainstorm and list what goals you have that you could align with the government's values and priorities:

a.

b.

c.

4. Build your advocacy timeline

Good advocacy is shaped by preparation and timing. Your timeline should connect your advocacy activity to the moments when the government is most likely to listen or act.

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Government has rhythms: budgets, sitting weeks, estimates, committee inquiries, funding rounds, policy reviews and, of course, elections. Think about how you can shape your advocacy to get the most out of this election cycle, both in the lead-up to the election, and afterwards.

Recommended actions and key events for the Federal Budget timeline (2027-28)

- August 2026: Start defining and preparing your advocacy
- November - December 2026: Pre-budget submissions open
- December 2026: Mid Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) report released
- Late January 2027: Budget submissions close
- February - May: Meet with stakeholders and show your submission
- May: Next federal budget is released

Create your timeline below:

Date	Action	Purpose	Key deadline
Late Nov 2026		***Pre budget submissions open***	
Late Jan 2027		***Budget submissions close***	

5. What makes a good pre-budget submission

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You have done the strategic thinking, the relationships are in place, you have a clear idea of what you are asking for and you understand the Government's priorities.

Now it's time to bring it all together in a **clear, concise and evidence-based pre-budget submission** that makes the case for your organisation and your proposed solution.

Note: Before drafting, take the time to read the relevant Treasury guidelines and ensure your submission meets all requirements, including any page limits, formatting requirements and submission criteria.

a. Introduce your organisation

Start by briefly explaining **who you are, what your organisation does and who you represent or support**. This provides important context for your recommendations and establishes why your organisation has a relevant perspective on the issue. Keep this introduction concise and focus on the information that is most relevant to your submission.

b. Keep it short and focused

Treasury advises that pre-budget submissions should generally be **no longer than four to five pages**. Use the available space carefully and focus on the issues and recommendations that matter most. A shorter submission with a clear argument is more likely to be read and remembered than a lengthy document covering too many issues.

c. Clearly define the problem

Set out the issue you are seeking to address in **plain, accessible language**. Explain who is affected, the scale of the problem and why government action is needed. Avoid assuming that the reader has specialist knowledge of your sector.

d. Clearly explain the practical solution

A pre-budget submission needs to clearly explain your recommendation of **what government should do about the issue you've presented**. Recommendations should be specific, practical and achievable. If you are seeking funding, clearly explain **how much funding is required, over what period, what it will be used for and what outcomes it will deliver**.

e. Make the case for government investment

Connect your recommendation to the outcomes government is seeking to achieve. Explain the benefits of action, including the impact on communities, service systems, productivity, participation or government expenditure where relevant. A strong submission makes it clear **why this investment or reform should be a priority now**.

f. Make it publication-ready

Pre-budget submissions are generally published on the Treasury website. **Write your submission on the assumption that it will be publicly available.** Check that all information, examples and data are appropriate for publication. If confidential information is necessary, clearly identify it and explain why it should remain confidential.

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Before you submit

Use this final checklist to make sure your submission is ready:

- ☐ It is **no longer than four to five pages**, unless the guidelines specify otherwise.
- ☐ It clearly introduces the organisation and explains its relevant expertise or role.
- ☐ The submission follows the **current Treasury guidelines and requirements**.
- ☐ The problem is clearly explained using plain language.
- ☐ Key claims are supported by credible evidence.
- ☐ Recommendations are specific, practical and achievable.
- ☐ Any funding request is clearly costed and explains the expected impact.
- ☐ The submission connects the ask to relevant government priorities.
- ☐ The document is suitable for public release, with any confidential information clearly identified.
- ☐ The key ask can be understood quickly and is consistent throughout the submission.

The test: After reading your submission, a policymaker should be able to answer three questions: What is the problem? What do you want the government to do? Why should the government act now?

6. Use your submission to build support

Finalising your pre-budget submission is **not the end of the advocacy process**. Once it has been submitted, use it as a reason to get back in front of the people who can influence your ask.

A submission gives you something concrete to put in front of MPs, Ministers, advisers and other stakeholders. Rather than simply sending it through the Treasury process and waiting for the Budget, **take the submission to parliamentarians and ask them to engage with your proposal**.

You can use the meeting to:

- Brief them on the key recommendations in your submission.
- Explain the local or community impact of the issue.
- Ask whether they support the proposal.
- Ask whether they can raise the issue with the relevant Minister or department.
- Find out whether there are concerns or questions about your proposal.
- Identify other parliamentarians or stakeholders you should speak to.

Where appropriate, provide a short version of the submission or a one-page briefing alongside the full document.

Don't just ask for support: ask for action

A meeting is more useful when you are clear about what you want from the person you are meeting with.

Instead of:

> "We wanted to make you aware of our pre-budget submission."

Try:

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> "We would like to brief you on our recommendation and ask whether you would support it and raise it with the caucus/relevant Minister."

Depending on the stakeholder, the action could be to **support your recommendation, raise it in Parliament, speak with the Minister, ask a parliamentary question, make a public statement or help connect you with the relevant decision-maker**.

Keep the conversation going

Follow up after meetings, provide additional evidence if requested and keep stakeholders updated if there are developments.

You can also use the submission to build broader support across the sector. If other organisations share your concern, consider whether there is an opportunity for joint advocacy or coordinated engagement.

Your advocacy and the submission opens the door; the conversations that follow can help build the support needed to turn your recommendation into a government commitment.

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Thank you.

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