

LETTER TEMPLATE

[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[Suburb, State, Postcode]

[Email Address]

[Phone Number]

[Date]

[MP's Name]

Member for [Electorate]

[MP's Office Address]

[Suburb, State, Postcode]

Dear [MP's Name],

Re: Urgent Need for Alternative First Responders in Health and Social Situations

I am writing as a concerned constituent of [Your Suburb or Electorate] to urge you to support investment in alternative first responder models and programs in Australia. Right now, we have a police-first response model. There are critical gaps in how we respond to community needs – gaps made worse by chronic underinvestment in social and community sectors. We currently lack a diverse, needs-based approach to the first response.

Police are not equipped—culturally or structurally—to deliver the right response. Even with additional training, research shows they continue to be inappropriate first responders in situations requiring de-escalation, care, or support. Far too often, individuals experiencing health or social distress are met with a law enforcement response that is neither equipped nor appropriate for their needs. This can escalate already vulnerable situations and result in avoidable harm, serious injury, or fatality. I am concerned about the current police-first response model when people need social or health support.

I believe we should have alternative options for when people need support—options that do not use force, do not criminalise people experiencing distress or poverty, and do not over-police marginalised members of our community.

[We encourage you to personalise this section to have the strongest impact – you can write why alternative first responders is important to you]

Programs overseas—like CAHOOTS in the United States—and similar pilot models in parts of Australia have shown that this approach can save lives, reduce reliance on police, reduce pressure on emergency departments, and deliver better outcomes for community members.

I ask you, as my representative, to:

- Challenge the status quo of the current default to police-first models, and uphold the role and effectiveness of alternative first responders.
- Make a formal commitment to and invest in community and/or cross-sector responders, due to their demonstrated best practice and evaluated effectiveness in harm reduction and fostering community wellbeing.
- Invest in a justice reinvestment strategy and allocate public safety funds to community-based health, social, and economic support initiatives.
- Ensure that future response strategies prioritise health and care over punishment, and are available to communities across Australia—both regional and metropolitan.

These changes are urgently needed, and your leadership in pushing for courageous policy and funding commitments for alternative first responders is essential.

Thank you for your time and service. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely, [Your Name]