

**Understanding who has
power, how we shift
them, and how we build
our own power**

**Presented by Anti-Poverty Network SA
Facilitator: Samantha**

Acknowledgment of Country

I want to begin by acknowledging that we meet tonight on stolen Aboriginal land, and pay my respects to Elders past and present, and to any First Nations people joining us tonight.

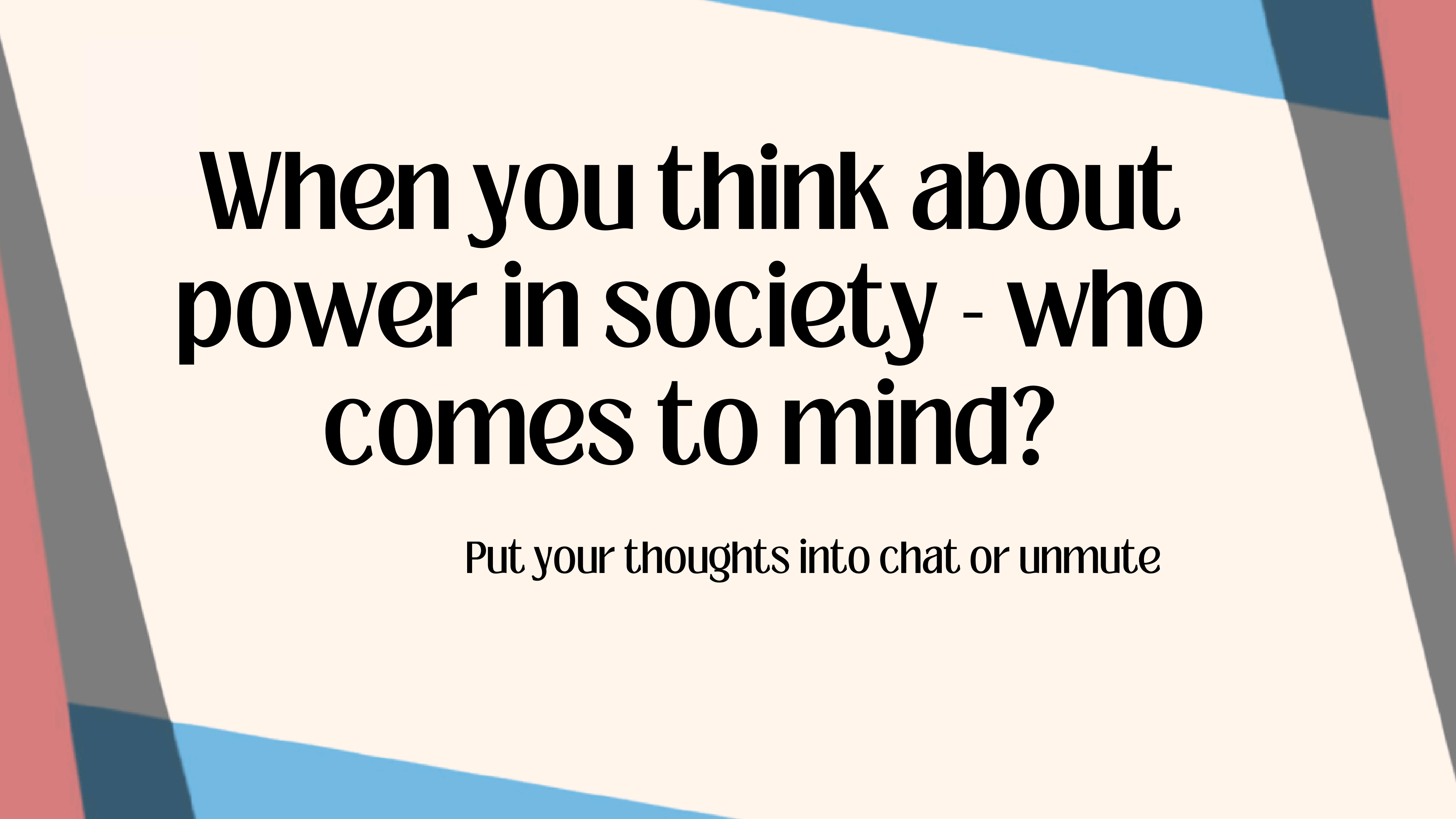
As we talk tonight about power – who has it, how systems operate, and how change happens – it's important to remember that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been resisting dispossession, poverty, state violence, and exclusion for over 200 years.

First Nations communities understand power mapping better than most. They know that power does not just sit in Parliament. It sits in laws, in policing, in media narratives, in who controls land and housing, in whose voices are listened to, and in whose suffering is ignored.

But they also show us what organised people and collective resistance can achieve – through survival, through community, through culture, through protest, and through generations of struggle for justice and self-determination.

As anti-poverty activists, understanding power means understanding colonisation, and understanding that many of the systems creating poverty and homelessness today were built on the dispossession of First Nations people.

I pay my respects again tonight, and give a commitment to building collective power for justice, for all.



When you think about power in society - who comes to mind?

Put your thoughts into chat or unmute

How Campaigns Win

Politicians and institutions respond to:

- public pressure
- political risk
- media attention
- organised communities
- changing public attitudes

Most successful campaigns use several of these things at once.

A useful way to think about this is through four things:

Public Pressure: Getting attention, visibility, mobilisation, public support.

Political Risk: Making inaction uncomfortable, either electorally, reputationally or socially.

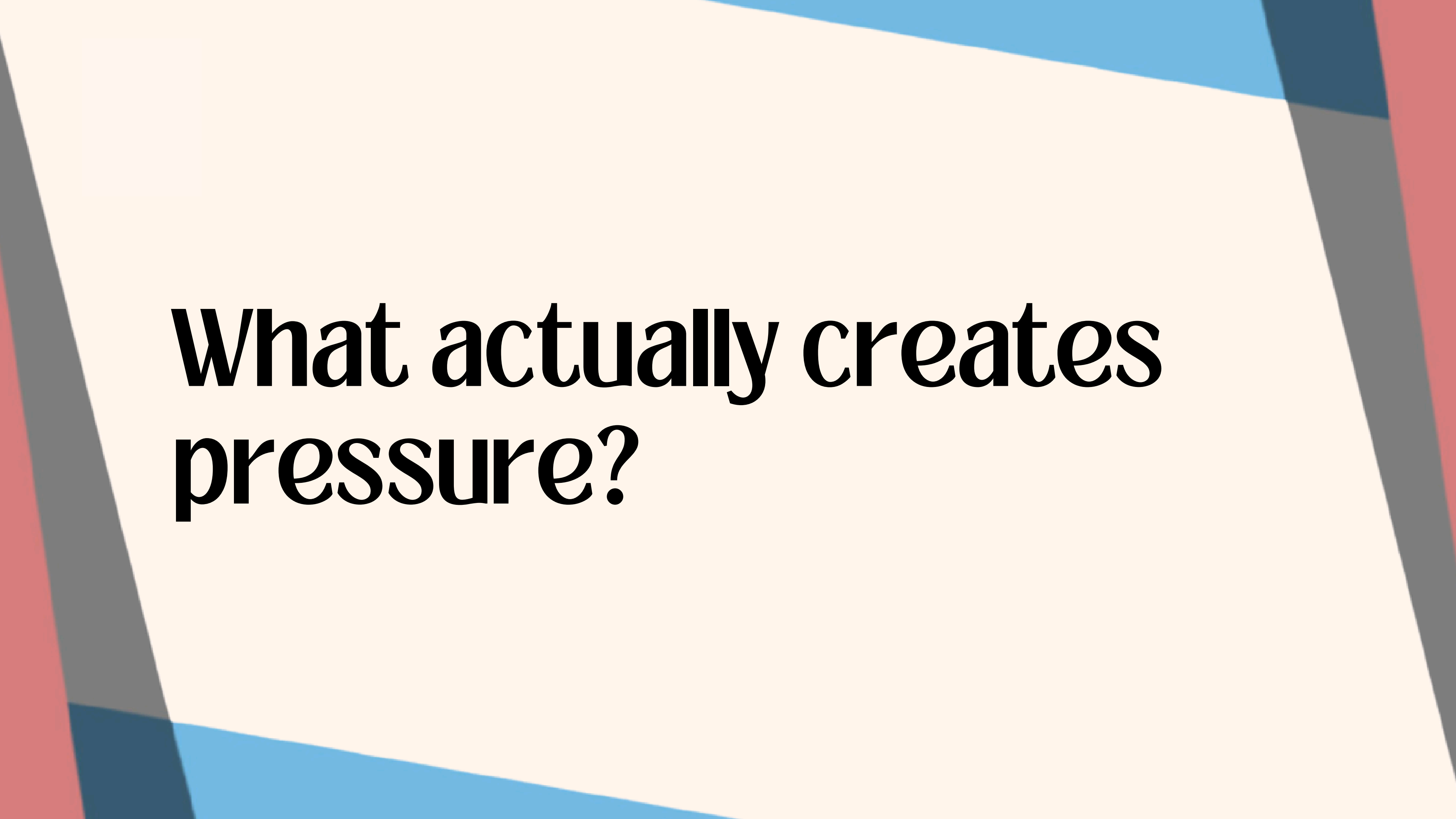
Narrative Shift: Changing how people understand an issue.

Organised People: Relationships to build trust, consistency and collective action. Movements are built by organised people, not just good ideas.



Have you seen public opinion shift on an issue in your lifetime?

Discuss why the shift came about, in your opinion.



**What actually creates
pressure?**

What kinds of pressure do governments respond to most?

Governments usually respond when there's some kind of cost to ignoring people.

That cost might be:

- losing votes
- bad media coverage
- public embarrassment
- internal pressure from within their own party
- sustained community anger
- pressure from organised groups
- disruption to “business as usual”

Different governments respond to different kinds of pressure – but very few governments change because people politely asked once.

Why do some protests/change efforts get ignored?

Sometimes campaigns get ignored because they're too small or short-term.

Sometimes it's because they don't clearly target the people with actual decision-making power.

Sometimes there's lots of moral passion, but not enough strategy.

And sometimes governments actually think:

“Yes, people are angry – but they'll move on in a week.”

What makes politicians nervous?

Usually:

- losing votes
- losing legitimacy
- becoming publicly associated with a harmful system or policy
- sustained bad publicity
- organised communities
- visible public anger
- divisions inside their own party
- growing movements they can no longer ignore

Politicians often tolerate criticism. What worries them more is organised criticism that keeps growing.

Especially when:

- media starts paying attention
- public opinion shifts
- more people get involved
- respected organisations join in
- people stop accepting the status quo

Can relatively small groups still have influence?

Absolutely.

Small groups can sometimes have enormous influence if they:

- are strategic
- are disciplined
- are organised
- understand where power sits
- build strong relationships
- tap into broader public feeling
- shift narratives

A lot of major social change started with relatively small groups of people who were initially dismissed.

Movements often look “sudden” at the end – but usually there were years of smaller organising efforts beforehand

Sometimes really small groups can have influence if they’re strategic, organised, persistent, or able to shift public narratives.”

One of the reasons some campaigns are more effective than others is because they understand where power actually sits...and that’s the important part.

Power mapping. Working out who holds the power.

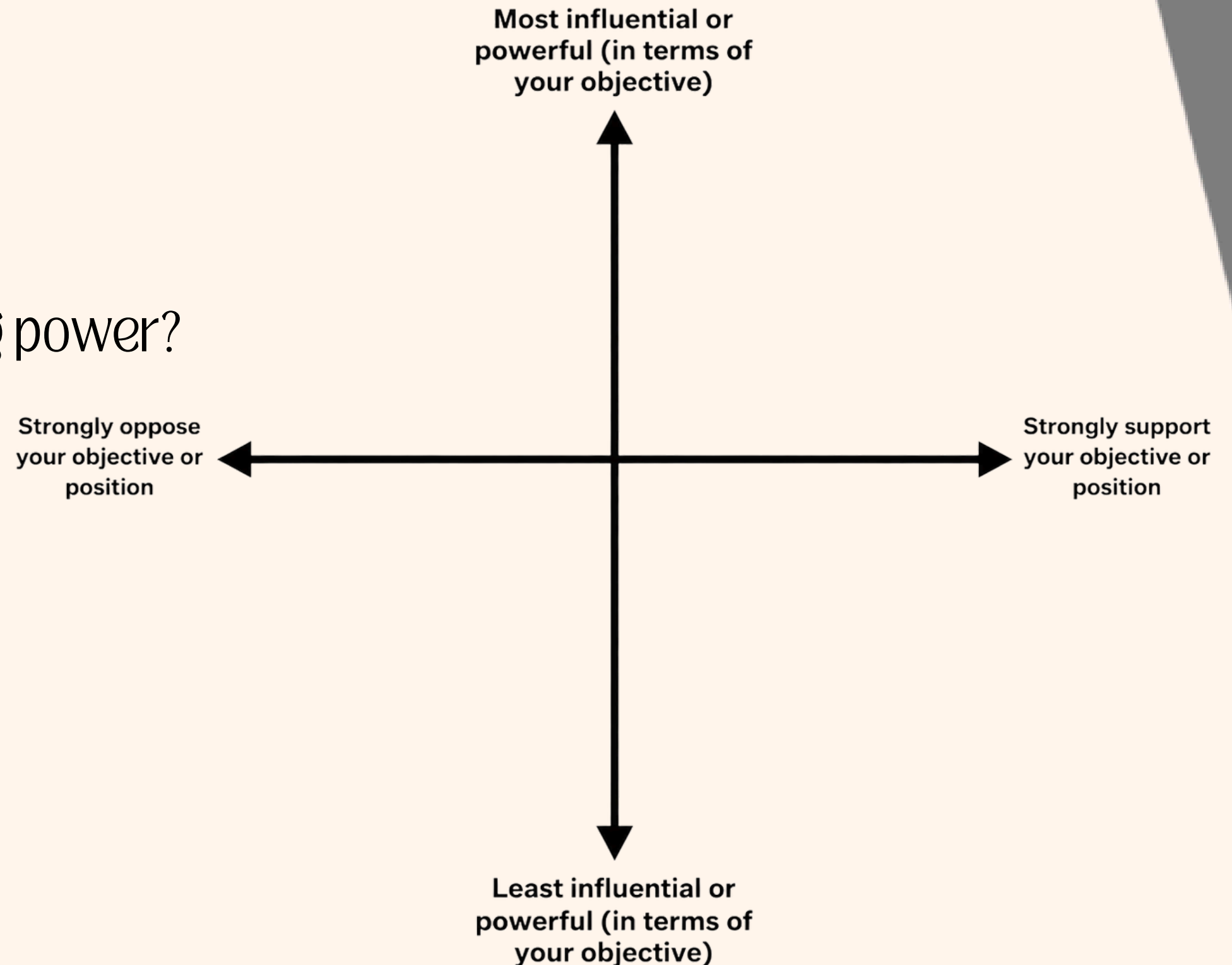
Power Map & Mapping Activity

Choose ONE issue:

Example - “More Public Housing in SA”

Discuss:

- Who actually has decision-making power?
- Who influences them?
- What pressure points exist?
- Who are allies?
- What tactics might work?



PUBLIC HOUSING MAP

OUR OBJECTIVE:

Build substantially more PUBLIC HOUSING in South Australia

Strongly oppose our objective (more public housing)

★ KEY INSIGHT:

Most of our allies are in the bottom right - they support our goal but don't have much power on their own. Our job is to organise, build numbers and pressure the decision-makers in the middle.

High power - oppose our objective

- Property developers
- Real estate industry
- Investor groups & financial interests
- Large landlord interests
- Property lobby organisations
- MPs who own investment properties / vested property interests
- Think tanks & media commentators who oppose public spending
- 'Fiscal conservative' groups (anti-public spending narrative)

Lower power - oppose our objective

- Some media outlets / commentators who push 'welfare dependency' myths
- Residents' groups that oppose new public housing in their area (NIMBY)
- Ratepayer associations focused on blocking growth / new builds
- Misinformation campaigns about 'costs' of public housing

Most influential or powerful (in terms of our objective)

Very influential - mixed / partial support (key decision-makers we need to influence)

SA State Government

- Has power to build public housing
- Has built some
- Prioritises community & affordable housing over public housing
- Not building at the scale we need

Federal Government

- Provides funding & sets housing policy
- Favors community housing & affordable housing models
- Not committed to a large-scale public housing program

Least influential or powerful (in terms of our objective)

High power - supportive of more public housing

- Housing Minister (if publicly backing expansion of public housing)
- Greens MPs
- Some Labor MPs
- Some Local councils
- Community housing advocates within government

Powerful but not strong enough allies on public housing

Lower power - strong support for more public housing

APNSA & member groups

- Tenants' unions
- Public housing tenants
- Homelessness services
- Anti-poverty organisations
- Faith groups
- Trade unions

Students & young people

- Renters
- Community organisations & activists

Strongly support our objective (more public housing)

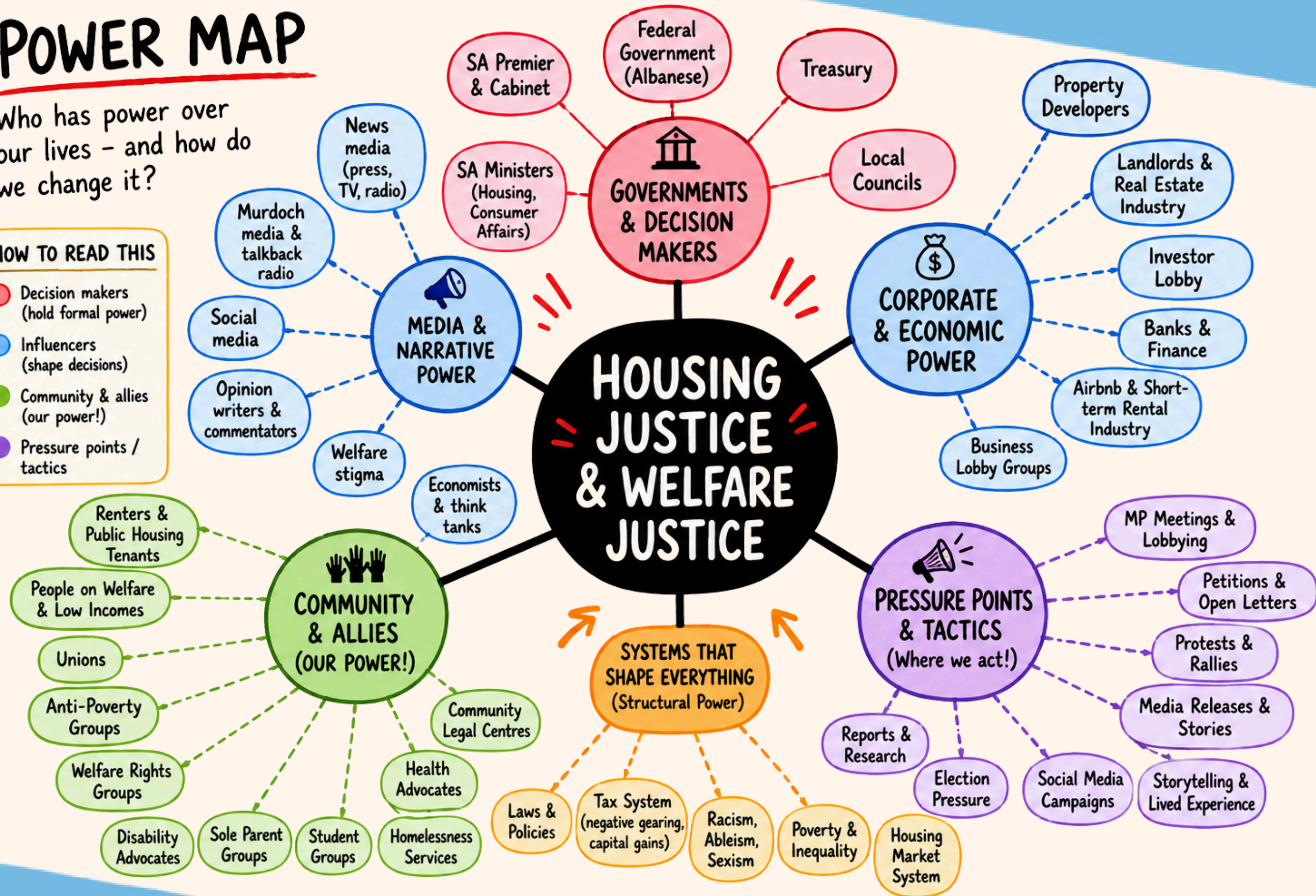
Our base. Lots of people who support our goal but have less power individually. Together we build power!

POWER MAP

Who has power over our lives - and how do we change it?

HOW TO READ THIS

- Decision makers (hold formal power)
- Influencers (shape decisions)
- Community & allies (our power!)
- Pressure points / tactics



Power Mapping Guide:

<https://commonslibrary.org/power-mapping/>

Next online session options:

- Story of self**
- Having conversations**
- How to hold an effective action**

Swing at golf course work

Mystery public servant to seek court injunction against development

Darren Chaitman

A public servant plans to seek a court injunction against his employer to halt the redevelopment of the North Adelaide Golf Course, despite it being too late to achieve his objective of saving trees.

Lawyer Ted Hui said his client – a state government employee who did not yet wish to be named – had instructed him to prepare an application for a Federal Court injunction against the controversial golf course development.



Lawyer Ted Hui

Mr Hui said he hoped the matter would go before court as early as this week, or alternatively by next week.

"From the client's perspective, it's a very tough decision, because the financial risk is substantial. It's one person versus the whole state govern-

ment and the contractor behind it," he said.

"It wouldn't be surprising if the cost orders against the losing party would be from \$50,000 to over \$100,000."

On Monday night, Mr Hui said his client hoped it was possible to stop the removal of more trees, but understood it could be too late by the time the matter was before court.

However, a state government spokeswoman said all tree removal for the \$45m development had been completed as of 5pm on May 16.

"My clients and many of the protesters, what they are looking at is more than just the trees," Mr Hui said.

"It's also the democratic process and the long-term redevelopment plan in that area."

"It's also to show the state government the strength of the people."

Mr Hui is seeking affidavits from professionals such as urban planners, ecologists, and heritage experts to testify on the development's harms, including its potential to undermine the status of the Adelaide

Park Lands' national heritage-listing status.

"We are relying on environmental law, which is the Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act," he said. "We need to establish a likelihood that the national heritage listing will be undermined. It's not impossible, but I would still admit that it's a difficult case."

The axing of 545 trees at Possum Park was met with strong protests, including by some protesters who chained themselves to machinery.

A government spokeswoman said the development represented "a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a world-class public golf facility in the heart of Adelaide, while carefully balancing environmental considerations and the protection of the Adelaide Park Lands".

"The redevelopment will include 1700 new trees planted to ultimately deliver a tree canopy expansion, including growing new trees offsite to ensure they are as mature as possible come planting," she said.