

# CROWDFUNDING FOR CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

## WHY CROWDFUND

Large scale community civil disobedience campaigns are very resource intensive. It is expensive to support people to get to places, pay for infrastructure, bulk catering, logistics, gear, communications needs - there are all kinds of things needed to keep a campaign ticking over.

Often groups have the best of intentions and commit to covering the fines of people who are arrested for taking peaceful protest action. This is a huge responsibility, and whilst the principle of supporting people with limited financial means is important, the writer believes that should be prioritised for rare cases of need. Most people have the social networks to raise this money themselves through crowdfunding.

Crowdfunding for fines has multiple purposes -

- It gives you a new opportunity to talk about how and why you took action... why it was important for you, and what you felt was achieved.
- it allows your friends, family and professional networks to feel involved and support you in a tangible way for a brave step you took. They then feel more invested and connected to the movement
- Many people are pleasantly surprised by friends or family they considered conservative supporting them
- It takes stress away from the movement, in terms of needs of fundraising for many people's fines

Overall, one of the fundamental principles of nonviolent civil disobedience is that we are taking action for strong moral or ethical reasons - but also, that we accept that there are consequences for taking these actions. Crowdfunding for fines lets us take a moral stance, and for our personal networks and community to support us in facing the consequences.

## SO - Where do I start.

There are many crowdfunding sites you can consider. You can read more about them and compare [them here](#). Many activists have found CHUFFED to be a useful platform. They are Australian owned, by progressive people, and don't charge fees. Others can be very easy to use, but some have restrictions on what you can raise money for. So, check their terms and conditions.

Here are some learnings from the [first crowd-funder](#) we ran for CounterAct. And some general tips for [crowdfunding promotional tools](#).

## TIPS FOR CROWDFUNDING

We will link to some general tips to crowd funding, but there are some specific pointers to be aware of when raising money for activist related fines.

- Tell a compelling story. Your friends will respond to you, and your story. Be honest about your fears and concerns going in, and what felt powerful about taking action with other people. Share pictures and a short video if you can. It can be as simple as a 30-60 second phone video explaining how and why you took action. If you feel self-

conscious asking a friend to film it, do it yourself in your room, just try to make sure the light and sound is as best as you can manage.

Make sure you don't say anything that will make further legal consequences for you though (ie: I'm going to go straight out again and break the law!)

- Be honest and transparent about where the money is being used, and what you will do if you receive excess to your needs. It can be a great opportunity to share any extra with people who have less extensive or resourced social networks than you
- Thank people properly! Give them shout outs on social media and follow up with emails at the end of the funding ask. Also, this can be a great excuse to try and get them more involved in the campaign ;)

## **BEFORE OR AFTER MY COURT CASE**

Whilst people often talk about maximum penalties for dramatic effect and in media, they are almost never applied for first or second time nonviolent civil disobedience offences. Its best to refer to "likely costs" if you are fundraising before the fact for a fine. \$500 or under would be a reasonable ballpark for most low-level offences, with it being more likely to be in the mid hundreds range. This can vary state to state and higher penalties have been regularly seen in Central Queensland with actions interfering in the Adani mine infrastructure and around the country.

Whilst there can be benefit in capitalising on when there is significant media interest in an action it may be best to wait until after court finalise your penalties. One learning in Queensland was that a magistrate who had people regularly before him in Bowen would take crowdfunding into account if it was already underway, when considering peoples capacity to pay. So, people who were very low income were getting large fines, simply because they had anticipated some community support. For this reason, the legal support team for Camp Binbee advises people to not crowd fund until after court is finalised. You should also be careful in sharing your story publicly, and on social media, before your court case is finalised, as you may inadvertently give information to the prosecution that helps them make a case against you.

If you have a well-paid job in the movement, or a full-time salary, perhaps you should consider covering the costs yourself, rather than calling on the community who may want to preference fundraising for lower income people. In most cases you can also ask for time to pay. Community service to pay off fines is an option in some states for a small number of people but can be very strictly limited. Check your local state.

Good luck!