

Using the Media

The media is a powerful tool and choosing the right type of media to support/promote a campaign is important to get your message across and ultimately affect the opinions and actions of the community. Whether you decide to use media – whether traditional or social – make sure you have a clear objective.

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DIFFERENT FORMS OF MEDIA

Television: news, current affairs, chat shows, documentaries.

Radio: news, current affairs, talkback.

Print: daily newspapers, weeklies, magazines, news, features, reviews, letters to the editor, opinion pieces.

Online and social: websites, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), [StumbleUpon](#), [change.org](#), [LinkedIn](#), online news sites, blogs, forums, pod casts, [Crikey](#), [Online Opinion](#)

PLANNING YOUR MEDIA MESSAGE

Whether you're preparing a media release, letter to the editor, opinion piece, talkback call, or media interview, think about the following:

- **Your goal** – what do you want to happen? eg, get people along to a public meeting; influence MPs to support your issue in parliament.
- **Your target audience** – where do they get their information from?
- The **key messages** you want to communicate – what can you say that will motivate your target audience to achieve your goal?

Given the above, what form of media is most suitable?

WHAT MAKES A STORY 'NEWSWORTHY'?

- **Timeliness** – that's why they call it 'news'!
- **Currency** – an idea whose time has come. Do you have a different angle on an issue that is already in the news?
- **Human interest** – we love to hear stories about how issues affect real people. Remember confidentiality and that your 'talent' will need support.
- **Conflict** – controversy will draw attention, but be careful that this is not going to work against you
- **Proximity** – what's the local take on the issue?
- **Unusual quality** – what makes this story something out of the ordinary?
- **Impact** – the 'so what' factor. Why will people care about this issue?
- **The number of people involved** – the more people affected by the issue, the more newsworthy
- **Celebrity** – do you have a celebrity spokesperson or someone who is well known locally who might support your campaign?
- **Pathos** – we all love an emotional story. Just be careful that you don't stereotype a group who might not want others' sympathy (eg, cancer patients, people with disability)
- **Shock value** – tabloid media loves this, but be careful as it may work against you!

[Adapted from Cybercollege.com](#)

WRITING A MEDIA RELEASE

A media release is the most common way to pitch a story to the media. An effective media release will include key messages and alert the media to a story, raising enough interest for them to want to find out more. Or better still they might publish your message as is!

Checklist for writing a media release:

- Start with a short catchy heading, to grab attention.
- The 'lead' sentence should summarise the most important points about your story: who, what, where, when, why and how.
- Follow with other information in order of importance, remembering your key messages. Only include the most important points.
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short and punchy.
- Use simple language and avoid jargon or abbreviations.
- Use quotations.
- Use dot points to break up information.
- Proofread and check that your information is accurate.
- One page only!
- Include your contact details and keep your phone turned on!
- A follow up phone call is a good idea.
- For information about where to send your release, look for relevant contacts in targeted press, or consult [Margaret Gee's Australian Media Guide](#) (may also be available in the reference section of your local library if you can't afford to purchase).

ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

There are lots of ways for you to get attention and support for your advocacy campaign, even when it might be hard to engage mainstream media. When it comes to social media, we are all journalists, and we can write and control our own stories!

- Setting up a simple website for your group or issue is a great place to start. You can then link material on your website to [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) etc.
- Write an email about your issue – with a link to your website – and send it to all your friends. Ask them to send it on to their friends.
- Set up a Facebook page for your group or issue. 'Like' it from your Facebook page and encourage your friends to do the same. You can set up event pages to promote upcoming events.
- Use Twitter to generate interest in your issue and events. Start by 'following' people who may be interested in the issues you are working on.
- Start up your own blog about your issue. Many sites such as [WordPress](#), [Blogger](#) or [Tumblr](#) offer simple, free ways to publish your information.
- Post photos of events on sites such as [Instagram](#), [Flickr](#), or [Pinterest](#). Post a video clip on [YouTube](#) and link back to your website and [Facebook](#) page.
- Free web-based platforms where you can start your own online petition and share it through social media. Examples include [change.org](#) and [CommunityRun](#).
- The best way to get started on social media is to set up private pages/accounts and have a go. You can apply what you learn to your advocacy campaign.

YOUR MEDIA POLICY

No matter how small your group or organisation, you should have a clear media policy that outlines who is authorised to speak to the media and the procedures for handling media contact. Consider things such as who is authorised to write media releases and who needs to check them before they go out.

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MORE INFORMATION

[Beth's Blog](#) – by social media guru, Beth Kanter

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