



Tip Sheet - Media

Write a Media Release

A media release gives journalists the essence of your story. In addition, as you write, you'll clarify your pitch. This will help prepare you for talking to media.

- Work out in your head what your key messages are, KEEP IT TO 1 OR 2, or sketch it out on paper.
- Decide on your target audience (e.g. local paper or national TV). Write for your target.
- Write a **one-page** (no longer!) media release in plain English
- The most important point goes in the first paragraph.
- Be brief and concise, but don't assume the media knows all about the issue.
- Your headline/subject line must be catchy to gain immediate attention. Keep it simple: *'Wide Bay community vows to fight coal mine proposal'* is better than *'Wide Bay mine proposal will be discussed at community meeting next week'*.
- Know the deadlines, or the best time to send a release to each outlet. Allow plenty of time.
- Build relationships with journalists/outlets and follow up your releases with a phone call.
- Include a (high resolution) photo if it's useful or suggest photo opportunities. (If you have a Flickr site you can direct journalists to your event photos).
- Not all of your releases will be used but don't lose heart.
- If a story is used, promote it through social media via online links.
- Put your media releases on your website, so you can send links to them via Twitter & Facebook. See [LTG examples](#).
- You don't always have to put out a media release. Just call, text or direct message your media contact - without becoming a pest!

Build relationships with journalists

It's important to build relationships with journalists/outlets. Follow up your media release with a phone call. Remember that journalists are simply looking for a story – don't assume they are your friend or your enemy. To build trust you need to be reliable. For example, if you promised something by a deadline, don't miss it. Be upfront if there's a delay. Above all, never lose your cool – you *need* journalists.

Important practicalities

- Date your release at the top
- Include quotes or those of your spokesperson, including their title.
- If there is an event (e.g. an upcoming meeting, mention it at the end of the MR.
- Include your contact details
- Email the media release to all journalists you think will be interested in your region, or the editor or chief-of-staff at the outlet.

Once you have sent your media release

Journalists are extremely busy with time pressure, so don't assume your emails will be read. It's best to call soon after to confirm they have received the media release. Be aware of the time you sent it, and the subject line so they can find it easily among the hundreds they receive. During this call you can generally chat with the journalist about the issue to encourage them to cover it, unless they are too busy.

Getting journalists to your event

We can never assume that media will turn up to an event. You can increase the chances of them coming if you call them before you make the time/date - to make sure it's a good time for media to consider turning up.

- The day before the event, remind them that something is happening - in the style of a media alert: WHAT/WHEN/WHO/WHY?
- Call the night before or on the day to find out if they are still planning to come or have had a better offer.
- If no media shows up, you can video or audio record your speech. Speak as if you have an audience then post it on social media/website.
- Call any journalists you think may be interested after the event to let them know how it went.
- Send them 2 or 3 of your best high-resolution photos, or links to video uploaded to YouTube or Vimeo.
- 'Live tweet' events to help spark media interest from those who may not have been able to attend.
- Ask a few people to write letters to the local paper after the event with comments or feedback.

Radio News

If you haven't done radio interviews before, and you are called for a comment by a reporter/presenter about your media release or a running story, don't worry. Just explain that you haven't done it before and they'll happily run you through the procedure. Basically, they'll ask you some questions and use no more than 2 sentences in the final cut of a news story. So you must be succinct in every answer.

- Radio news journalists will not always attend your media events and may ring you before or afterwards for a 'grab' or 'sound bite'. If you don't feel prepared, ask if you can call them back. Find a quiet space for your interview. Have some key points written down in front of you. Keep your message simple, short and to the point, and stick to it.
- If it's for the news, prepare for a 15 second 'grab'. The function of a 'grab' is to make a point within a story, not tell the whole story. The reporter will write the news story based around your release and/or other information received and others' interviewed.
- If it's an extended interview, prepare for slightly longer answers but keep them tight. Don't waffle but be passionate. If you muck up what you're trying to say, stop and ask for another go to get it right. Journalists will be happy to do this – as long as it's pre-recorded, not LIVE. If you feel you are rambling ask if you can start again. It is often more effective to have less to say than too much.
- Use simple, direct language. Speak in complete sentences to make editing easier. If you're asked what you think about the 'the government's action' on CSG', spell out in your answer who/what you're criticising, e.g. "The Federal Government is completely negligent ..." is better than "I think that they are completely negligent....."
- Don't be tricked into saying something you don't want to. If you don't say it, they can't use it!

Talkback radio

The ABC and commercial talkback radio is a perfect opportunity for people in your group to say what you want to say. Learn the talkback radio time-slots and work out when you and your friends should call in. You can often leave a taped message any time of the day/night on any subject. Everyone should have talkback radio numbers in their phone contacts for opportunistic comment.

Television

The same basics apply to TV news grabs as radio - if you're new to it, just explain that to the reporter/presenter and they'll run you through the procedure. The trick is to keep it succinct and speak in complete sentences for news grabs. If you stuff it up, ask if you can repeat it (but not too many times). Just speak normally, don't 'bung it on'! Some channels won't send reporters, so be guided by the camera operator as to where to look (either at an imaginary reporter or directly into the camera lens.)

Dressing for TV

- Dress neatly and appropriate to the occasion.
- Be relaxed and smile; stand with feet slightly apart. Don't slouch.
- Avoid wearing white as a main colour. Avoid loud or multi-coloured shirts and dresses, jangly jewellery, dangly earrings, reflective tie pins and anything that may distract viewers from what you're saying. Avoid clothes with fine stripes as these can strobe badly when viewed on television. Avoid wearing sun glasses and your prescription glasses if you can do without them, as they can cause reflections.
- Try not to fiddle with your hair or face during the interview.
- Makeup will help you look less flat or shiny on TV – but you also need to feel comfortable.
- Avoid overly-enthusiastic hand gestures. If you tend to do this, hold your hands together in a gentle clasp in front of your body.
- The camera operator often needs to get extra footage called 'overlay' after the interview. Just learn what they need and follow their directions.

Longer interviews

An interview for an in-depth program (e.g. 7.30 Report, Landline, Current Affair or The Country Hour) will take more time. It's still important to get the message across without waffling. Studio interviews can be done 'as live' (i.e. pre-recorded and played in later) or 'live'. Have dot points of your messages in front of you. Just stay calm and get your message across. Look directly at the interviewer and don't fidget.

Social Media

Social media is increasingly important. It's especially useful if you have hostile or ineffective media in your area. Best of all, it's free! If you are new to it, below is a rough guide but you may need your kids or someone tech-savvy to help you set it up. Otherwise, just google 'how to.....'. Don't forget to promote your media releases and/or media coverage through social media and in like-minded groups on facebook.

- Facebook allows you to post pictures, add videos, media releases, publicise event details, send detailed mass messages, and publicly communicate with other users.
- Twitter allows you to send short messages, update events, blog and announce news. You can use it in your campaign to instantly send a succinct message to followers and interact with other people in a one-on-one manner. It is very useful for promoting your media stories and comments.
- YouTube allows you to post your own videos online. If they are witty, funny or informative their reach can be wide.
- A FLICKR site can be very useful for your best campaign photos. You can create albums for your events, and send the links to journalists rather than attaching photos to emails.

Example of a media release

Have a look through [Lock the Gate media releases](#) on our website.

Media Release: July 2, 2015

Queensland and Tasmanian students join “shocking tour” of the coal seam gasfields

Western Downs’ local, Shay Dougall took a busload of university students and a Tasmanian researcher on an eye-opening tour today to give them some first-hand experience of the realities of living in the gasfields.

Mrs Dougall, spokesperson for the Hopeland Community Sustainability Group, said she wanted the leaders of tomorrow to realise the true impacts of the “invasion” of coal seam gas (CSG).

She told the 31 students from the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and the researcher from Frack Free Tasmania about the health impacts locals were suffering and their worries about loss of farming land, clean water and air and the impacts on their lifestyle.

“We are living in the middle of gasfields and locals are slowly going crazy living with this day-in, day-out,” she said. “There’s no certainty in their lives anymore and the stress is showing. The mining companies and the politicians just don’t seem to care. All they see are dollar signs.”

The group was particularly interested in the drive along Kubarilla Lane and the damage throughout the Braemar State Forest, between Tara and Dalby.

“The students had just been discussing CSG activity in the State Forest with a QGC representative who told them that there was nothing to see there and that they would have trouble finding any sign of CSG infrastructure,” Mrs Dougall said.

“But within seconds of driving into the forest the impact is obvious with wells, fenced infrastructure, widened roads, access ways and rows of felled trees.”

Carly Rusden, a University of Tasmania researcher from Frack Free Tasmania, has been touring impacted regions of NSW and Queensland since June 26 with Tasmanian cattle farmer, Brett Hall.

The Tasmania State Government in February extended its moratorium on fracking for a further five years.

“I wanted to experience the gasfields for myself so I could see the impacts first-hand, to gain an insight and a perspective that would help me deliver the truth back to Tasmanians about just what it really takes to live with CSG, and to fight it, and how important it is to pull together as a community,” Ms Rusden said.

QUT student and trip organiser, Freya Cubis said: “What we’ve heard and now seen, of the CSG impact has been a bit of a shock. The reality is so different to what you imagine. It is worth the experience to understand what is really going on.”

Contact:

Add your contacts here. If their mobile is unreliable – give them options

Example of a media alert

Media Alert: Sunday, Sept. 14

Eleven communities to declare themselves Coal Mine and Gasfield Free

As Queenslanders find themselves under siege from the State Government's draconian laws extinguishing our rights to object to mining proposals, 11 more communities have decided to throw down the gauntlet and fight.

On Sunday in an historic public ceremony, the communities near Gympie will declare themselves coal mine and gasfield free. This will be one of the largest declaration ceremonies in the history of the Lock the Gate Alliance and demonstrates the growing discontent of ordinary people against the bullying tactics of the Queensland government.

The declarations follow several months of community meetings and surveys. More than 90 per cent of residents in each of these communities demand to be mining free.

The declarations will come just days after the State Government controversially changed the rules to make it virtually impossible to object to mining proposals. Under the new Minerals and Energy Resources (Common Provisions) Bill 2014 landholders are stripped of all democratic rights in the mining approval process.

WHAT: Mining Free Declaration Day

WHEN: 2 pm Sunday, September 14

WHERE: Goomboorian Hall, Tin Can Bay Rd, Goomboorian

WHO: 11 local communities

Contact:

Vicki Perrin Ph....

Bronwyn Marsh Ph.....