

Information and advice on talking to the media

A media release is the most effective way of providing information to media outlets about your event, issue or program. Its purpose is to gain the interest of the media outlet, and provide them with the angle of how to position the story.

News value

What captures the interest of the media.

Some angles typically covered by the media include:

- ① new research
- ① launch of new services, resources, programs or initiatives
- ① local relevance
- ① performance milestone or achievement
- ① announcement about an up and coming forum or workshop
- ① human interest

The following information is needed:

Who Who is involved?

Where Where is it taking place?

What What is happening?

Why Why is it happening?

When When will it take place?

Make sure you've thought about it from the media's point of view – while an issue is important to you, you need to ensure you've made it important to journalists and their audience, increasing your chances of coverage.

Ensure your media release emphasises what's 'new', otherwise it won't be classified as news.

A media release should include no more than three 'key messages'. A key message is a point you want to get across to the media and general public. Any more than three is difficult to convey and remember.

Media release structure

- ① The headline should be short and snappy to grab attention. It should include key words from your release and sum up its subject.
- ① The first paragraph is called 'the lead'. It is the most important part of the release and should contain the strongest key message. This paragraph should also give the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* of the story.
- ① Editors may not read beyond the first paragraph, so it is important that gets their interest.
- ① After the lead, each remaining paragraph should be less important than the one that precedes it. When written this way, the story can, if necessary, be trimmed from the bottom up, paragraph by paragraph.
- ① Each paragraph is self-contained and regardless of how many paragraphs are deleted, the story should still make complete sense.
- ① Include quotes from spokespeople which consolidate the key messages. As quotes are often used by media, ensure you use these to communicate key messages rather than background information.
- ① Make sure your language is consistent with the Australian Government's Mindframe *Guidelines for reporting mental illness and suicide*. See www.mindframe-media.info.

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Media release format

- ④ Keep your media release to one page (maximum 400 words). The aim is to encourage a reporter to pursue your story, not to overwhelm them with detail.
- ④ Include the date at the top of the media release.
- ④ If the media release is to be available immediately, include the words 'For Immediate Release'.
- ④ If you'd like to send out a media release in advance, include the word 'Embargoed' and the future date of release, for example – 'Embargoed until 1 January 2020'. An 'embargo' is often used to let media know about an upcoming event so they can allocate staff.
- ④ Include contact details (name, email, phone number) at the bottom of the release, and make sure a spokesperson is available to comment and is familiar with the release (see Factsheet *Media Interviews*).
- ④ If the release includes details of an event, provide a street directory reference as well as the address.

Media release writing tips

- ④ Write in the present tense.
- ④ Keep it simple, to the point, and factual.
- ④ Avoid using long words – short, plain English is best.
- ④ Avoid jargon and acronyms (for example, PHAMS or PDRS). A general audience is unlikely to be familiar with specialist terms, so it is best not to use them.
- ④ Avoid adjectives, and passive phrases such as 'I think' or 'I believe'.
- ④ Consider including facts or statistics which give context to the issue.
- ④ Be accurate with all information you provide such as names, job titles, times, dates and all facts.
- ④ If including numbers, be sure to keep them simple (for example, 'over one million' rather than '1,000,536') or make them meaningful to the reader (for example, 'enough water to fill 6 Olympic swimming pools' rather than '15,000,000 litres of water').
- ④ Ask someone else to read the release before it is distributed and remember, spell check is your friend!