

# Preparing to Write a Media Release

**Preparation** is vital when it comes to writing an effective, attractive and enticing media release.

The closer you get to a media release that not only grabs the attention of those in the newsroom but and needs little work to turn into a story - the better chance you'll have of seeing it run.

Your preparation should include:

- **Writing down all the major points relating to your story. In doing so, include information to get the media interested in your story, as well as the information the public needs to know.**
- **Placing your points in descending order from most important to least important.** Do the first few points clearly explain the basics of your group's story, and are they attractive to the media?
- **Finding an angle or a point of difference to makes your story more attractive.** This is especially important if your community group is staging the same types of event or announcing the same types of news.
  - An example of this is a group staging an annual festival. For the media release, they need to think about:
    - What is it that is different about this year's event? Has it been revamped? Is it "bigger and better" than ever before?
    - What is planned that makes it unique from the previous one, and the one before that?
- **Finding a human angle that makes the story warmer, or a "hook" that makes it more topical?** Both of these points will make your media release (and your story) more attractive to the media.

Once your group has prepared, it is time to write.

## Writing Your Media Release

### Grab them Early On – the Headline

It is vital when writing your group's media release to attract the journalist's interest right away. That is why the headline is so important.

You should put a bit of kick, and a bit of creativity, into the headline.

Use a famous name, a bad pun, an attractive turn of phrase, a big funding figure – just make sure the journalist reads on and doesn't instantly throw your release away. Half the battle is fought over the headline and opening paragraph.

Keep it short and in active voice: "Wildlife Rescued From Jackhammers" grabs attention better than "Kangaroos have been taken away from park under threat from developer."

Just under the headline you need to put down when the release date is. It is best practice to only send something out if it is **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**.

This doesn't mean that you only send out media releases immediately before your event or announcement – you can send out releases saying "The Big Day is Coming" – but you want the media to tell people now that it's still some way off.

If you are providing a release so they can prepare a story ahead of the date you are making the announcement you need to say for example **STRICTLY EMBARGOED. NOT TO BE RUN BEFORE 6AM ON MARCH 30, 2001**

# Telling the Story – The Body of the Release

Without doubt the first couple of paragraphs are the most important part of the release.

If the headline has got the media interested, then you need to win them over entirely in the first couple of paragraphs.

Here are 10 tips to make sure your release "keeps 'em reading".

- **Explain the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY and HOW of your story, and do it early on.**
  - If you can't do that then you might need to go back to the beginning and refine the message you are trying to tell.
- **List the points of interest you prepared earlier in descending order from the most interesting down.**
  - Use them as a basis for your release's structure.
- **Try to write the release in the way that you would like to see it reported.**
  - Make it easy for journalists to find the best parts of the release, and structure it so it reads similarly to how it would appear in the newspaper or newsreader's introduction. If it gets cut down to two paragraphs, it means the most important information survives.
- **Use clear, simple and economical language.**
  - This also means avoiding jargon and phrases which may not mean anything to the reader. The same with acronyms - unless you are talking about something that's well known.
- **Make your release active and upbeat.**
  - Keep the subject interesting – one way of doing this is by using quotes which make the release more human and also more relevant.
  - Try and use quotes that add clarity or can sum up your release in a concise, lively manner. It also helps to put a face to your organisation.
- **Stick to the facts.**
  - Don't make outlandish claims that can't be backed up and don't oversell.
- **Highlight the benefits/achievements/positives.**
  - Explain how people will benefit from going to your event, donating to your cause, working on your project, etc.
- **Keep it short.**
  - Keep your release to a page or page and a half at most. In the end, if the reporter needs more information they can contact you.
- **Remember the vital details.**
  - Ensure that the location, the date, and the time of your event/announcement/media conference, etc. is included and highlighted.
  - Also make sure your group's contact details are included – and have a spokesperson ready and willing to chat.
- **Check and re-check.**
  - Proof read your release, read it aloud and then have a friend or colleague do the same.
  - You may find typos or other errors while doing so, or it could help you edit your release and make it sound more interesting.

You are now ready to send it off to the media. For more information on that, refer to the [Sending a Media Release](#) help sheet available at the **Marketing, Media and Post Centre** on the Our Community website.