

# Media Releases

Engagement range	Inform
Difficulty level	Medium
Cost	Low (up to \$1,000)
When might you use it	To communicate an issue To build alliances, consensus To showcase product, plan, policy To discover community issues
Number of people required to help to organise	One-three, depends on the audience size and level of complexity
Time to organise	Medium (six weeks to six months )
Size of audience	Large (up to 30)
Issues/resources to think about	Volunteers/staff
Innovation level	Low

## Description

Project information released to various media corporations. Media releases are seen as being official and reflecting the corporation/group/agency position or the outcome of a project. They can also be used to raise awareness and generate publicity.

## Objective

- To get the widest possible coverage for a community issue or proposal through the publication or broadcasting of the information in the release. It may also elicit further enquiries by the media organisation about the issue, or the group or agency that put out the release.

## Desired Outcome

- Wider awareness of an issue or proposal.

## Uses/Strengths

- Can disseminate information quickly to a large number of people.
- Can be a predetermined method of notification.
- Can raise publicity and awareness.
- Can help an organisation or community group to make contact with the media.
- Can alert media organisations to an issue/event and may encourage their active participation through civic journalism.

## Special Considerations/Weaknesses

- Difficult to retract, should any changes occur.
- Should be written in a journalistic style (see Method).
- May not be used if more exciting news events take priority.
- May be re-written and key facts/ emphasis changed.
- Media organisations may become interested in an aspect of the project/issue that is not the focus of public concern.
- Media releases are competing with thousands of other incoming news items, and have a better chance of being used if they are sent directly to a journalist who has had previous friendly contact with the sender.
- The size of media releases limit the amount of real content that can be incorporated.
- Media releases have a better chance of being accepted if they have an element of controversy or risk, however an organisation or group may not wish to focus on possible negative outcomes or risks.

## Step by Step Guide

1. Determine the main news angle you wish to communicate.
2. Check deadlines for local publications/television/radio bulletins to ensure media release is received in time to be published before the event. Some local newspapers have a Friday deadline for the following Wednesday publication date. Radio programs may need to check the spokesperson to see whether they will be suitable for on-air interview, etc.
3. On average, send releases two weeks before events, except to magazines which may have a two three month lead time for publication.
4. Follow news style:
  - 4.1. Keep the focus local (with local spokespeople) for local papers.
  - 4.2. Send only major capital city issues or state-wide issues to state papers; only national issues (and use national spokespeople) for national papers/magazines.
  - 4.3. Use short sentences. Each sentence should be a separate paragraph.
  - 4.4. Use active sentences 'the group have decided', not 'It has been decided'.
  - 4.5. Avoid jargon and difficult words (keep it simple).
  - 4.6. Write about your group: 'The group will hold a poster competition at the Centralville Town Hall on Wednesday, 23 January'.
  - 4.7. First paragraph of no more than 25 words telling briefly who, what, where, when and why about the event, issue or project.
  - 4.8. If using quotes in the body of the release, quote credible spokespeople and identify them with their positions in the organisation.
  - 4.9. Keep information clear and unambiguous.
  - 4.10. Keep releases short, no longer than one page. If the media want more information, they will contact you.
  - 4.11. If for a community notices column, check the required size and format of items (may be 30 words or less).
  - 4.12. Include in the media release the date the release was written, and a contact name and phone number for someone who is easily contacted during office hours.

5. Check whether the media prefers email (most do now), or whether you can distribute your release via the Australian Associated Press (AAP) network (this will reach an Australia-wide audience).
6. If offering interviews make it clear whether this is an exclusive for one media outlet (could be one print, one radio and one television, as these do not see one another as competing). This can encourage coverage of your issue, whereas a general media conference may not be well attended.
7. Track coverage to see how and when your information is published.

Be sure to write and thank the journalist to develop a relationship that may encourage them to work with your organisation in tracking progress on the issue/project, and hence keep the community informed.