



MEDIA GUIDE FOR THE VOLUNTEER SECTOR



Government
of South Australia



OFFICE FOR
VOLUNTEERS

INTRODUCTION

The State Government is proud to support the volunteer community in the valuable work that it undertakes, and hopes to assist it to meet future challenges and opportunities. One of these challenges includes raising public awareness and recognition of the role of volunteers and encouraging more people to become involved in volunteering.

It is important that we productively utilise the media in all its forms to convey information and increase awareness. I hope that this guide will assist volunteer organisations to understand and work with the media for effective communication and maximum benefit.

South Australia has the highest rate of volunteer involvement per capita of any State or Territory. We volunteer both time and energy in a variety of contexts, which include the arts, community services, education, emergency services, sport and recreation, health, tourism and the environment.

Now more than ever, it is important that initiatives are developed to help strengthen the volunteer community. The Media Guide is one such initiative and the Office for Volunteers hope it will prove to be a valuable resource for many years to come.



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INTRODUCTION

Getting your message across to the media requires a strategic approach. This manual provides you step by step instructions on the best way to package and deliver your story.

SOME ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF NEWS

There are a number of things journalists will look for when assessing a story.

In general, the following questions are likely to arise:

- What is unique about the information?
- What is unique about those involved?
- How does it affect the public or target group you are writing for?

GETTING THE MEDIA INTERESTED

When trying to attract the media's interest, you should bear in mind certain "angles" which will serve as a suitable "hook" for those journalists who may cover your story.

These can include the following:

- the official launch of a project
- marking the completion of an important phase in a project
- highlighting what is unique about the project eg. a one-off for your region or industry
- the release of key survey data concerning your project/company/department etc
- presentation of the final appraisal of your project



THE MEDIA

The media is vast, with many more outlets in existence than people realise, particularly with the advent of the Internet.

There is the mainstream media - the vast array of newspapers, radio stations and television networks which we read, listen to and watch on a regular basis.

However, when visiting a news agency you will notice the many publications which cover those areas of interest not usually covered by the daily press.

From magazines on gardening and scuba diving, to computing and shipping, the array of publications adapted to particular interests can be overwhelming.

Some are targeted at such specific markets in publications which are not available in newsagents but are accessible through subscriptions.

When preparing a media release regarding a specific area of interest, make sure it is distributed to those organisations which may have an interest in your particular area.

The mainstream media comprises radio, television, and print - mainly newspapers. However, with the information technology revolution, previous notions about the media are changing as more organisations are using multi-media to convey their message.



THE MEDIA

Radio

The most immediate medium.

Radio stations don't run the same story over and over. They tend to move their stories quickly in a bid to maintain variety. They like immediacy. Something that happened much earlier in the day may not be considered newsworthy. While your story may get a run in a radio news bulletin, it's likely to get just one or two spots in regular news bulletins before being replaced by other stories of interest.

Television

Television is not so immediate, or so flexible. It will rarely run a story until it can gain some vision to go with the story. A strong story without pictures may struggle to get coverage in a TV news bulletin. However a much weaker story supported by good vision is likely to receive coverage. Television newsrooms are geared towards the main nightly bulletin - which is seen as the station's flagship program. ABC TV newsrooms may have more of a bent towards issue-based stories, but are also eager for visual content to illustrate new items.

Newspapers

Newspapers have far more space in which to tell a story. They can go into much more detail than radio or television. Generally speaking, they also tend to have a bit more time in which to prepare their story.

They prefer stories which come with a good picture - and not the same image as you might see on the TV news. A good photograph can certainly push a story up to the front pages of the newspaper.

Suburban And Country Newspapers

The local newspaper may often be the best possible way to promote your story, because it is often directly targeted at your specific audience.

The great thing about the local throwaway is it has a longer "shelf" life than the city daily. If you haven't got time to read all of The Advertiser, it is unlikely you will revisit the paper the following day. However the local Messenger paper may sit around the house for up to a week, prompting the reader to relook at various stories when they have a free moment.

These local papers also have a bias towards the truly parochial. If you can find the appropriate local angle, you can almost guarantee coverage for your particular project.



COMMUNICATION TOOLS

The media release

The media release is the basic tool for accessing the media.

The release goes to all forms of media and is not specific to one particular media discipline.

A news release should convey what you want to say, simply and concisely.

A busy news editor has a short attention span. Your story needs to be simple, and easily understood.

A media release should promote one simple idea.

If you aim to cover a number of issues, you will ultimately confuse the Chief of Staff or journalist who is being called upon to make a judgment about its news value.

The lead paragraph

Keep your lead paragraph simple. It should convey the essence of your story and be punchy enough to attract the interest of a newsroom chief of staff or journalist.

Media releases should be short and to the point

Remember you are competing with a host of other organisations and individuals when it comes to gaining media coverage. The media release should be short and to the point, without a mountain of detail. An effective media release should run for about a page to a page and a half of text. Simple and concise - two words which sum up a good media release.

Quotes/spokesperson

In many cases, quotes will support the story you are offering in your news release and will give the print media valuable material should they not be able to interview the key spokesperson.

These quotes can incorporate or substantiate key details or add to key points raised earlier in the release.

Contact details

Provide work and after hours numbers, and mobile, if you have one.



AN EXAMPLE OF A MEDIA RELEASE



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE USE
27 FEBRUARY, 2001

VOLUNTEER CATEGORY FOR SA TOURISM AWARDS

To mark the International Year of Volunteers 2001, the South Australian Tourism Awards has created a one-off category for “outstanding contribution by a volunteer”.

The award will be presented to an individual who has worked in a voluntary capacity to advance the tourism industry in South Australia.

Tourism Awards Co-ordinator Elke Langman said today nominations for the award were now open and would be received until Wednesday, May 9, 2001.

Judging criteria for the award would include the length of service of the volunteer; the benefits which have resulted from this work – including its impact at local, regional and state level; and the type of work and level of involvement of the nominee.

The nominator must provide a typed two page submission to support the application and include a photograph of the nominee, letters of support from individuals involved in tourism and at least one letter of endorsement by a local or regional tourism organisation, tourism industry association or local government.

“It would be expected that a significant contribution would be endorsed by a number of tourism organisations,” Ms Langman said.

Nominations should be forwarded to Elke Langman, South Australian Tourism Awards, GPO Box 1972, ADELAIDE SA 5001.

The winner of the award will be announced at the South Australian Tourism Awards presentation night on Friday, July 20, 2001.

FOR MEDIA COMMENT:
ELKE LANGMAN
(08) 8463 4626



GETTING THE MEDIA TO AN EVENT

The early advice

To entice journalists to attend your event, you need to alert them in an interesting way - usually through early advice to the media.

Make sure you have obtained fax numbers for the key media, and a couple of days before your event, send out your early advice.

What the early advice does

As the name implies, it advises the media of an upcoming event.

It is not an official news release, but merely advises the media of what they can expect when they attend.

An early advice to the media should include details about the following:

- What the event is and how it will be conducted.
- When the event is being held, and at what time.
- The location of the event.
- A brief background to inform media, and help stimulate their interest.
- ...and importantly, a description of the some of the vision or photographs they can expect to get should they attend. In other words, plenty of opportunities for pictures.



AN EXAMPLE OF AN EARLY ADVICE



2001
International Year
of Volunteers

EARLY ADVICE

FOR WEDNESDAY
MARCH 7, 2001

WRITERS' CENTRE RECOGNISES VOLUNTARY WORK AT HANDBOOK LAUNCH

The SA Writers' Centre today launches its new handbook, featuring contributions from many of the State's top authors.

And in recognition of the International Year of Volunteers, the Centre is highlighting the many hours of voluntary work which is put into the compilation of the guide.

The Centre, which boasts more than 1200 members, also has a number of volunteers who help in the Centre's day-to-day operations.

A spokesperson for the Centre, Ms Barbara McFadyen, said the handbook included pieces provided by writers such as Janeen Brian, Sean Williams, Margie Hann-Syme and Steven Hocking, as well as lists of agents, publishers and manuscript assessors.

WHEN:	Wednesday, March 7, 2001 at 5.30pm
WHERE:	SA Writers' Centre The Atrium, 2nd floor, 187 Rundle St, Adelaide
PICTURE OPPORTUNITY:	Some of Adelaide's top writers at the book launch
MEDIA ENQUIRIES:	Barbara McFadyen (08) 8223 7662



PLANNING FOR A MEDIA EVENT

In planning for a media conference, you should always give yourself adequate time to ensure all bases have been covered. Sometimes events will overtake you, but in most circumstances you should have ample time to adequately plan and implement your short-term media strategy.

TIMING

The first decision to make should be about important logistics - time/location etc. Often mid-morning is a good time for a news event because it allows crews plenty of time to process your story.

To maximise your chances of media coverage, you should pick a day which you believe may be a slow news day. This may be difficult but in general, there are a few pitfalls to watch out for.

Make sure the location is within a reasonable distance for news crews. There's no point organising a media event if it's too far away for news crews to attend. Also make sure the location provides a suitable visual backdrop for television.

Having decided on the time and location, prepare the media release and allow yourself plenty of time for all parties involved to approve the relevant material.

You now need to give the media plenty of notice about your event through the preparation of an early advice.

This advice should contain all the relevant details mentioned earlier in this guide, along with appropriate contact details.

Send the early advice at least a day before your event, so that chiefs of staff and producers have plenty of time to slot your story into the list of possible items for the following day.



PLANNING FOR A MEDIA EVENT

Consideration should also be given to those in the media who will not be able to attend your event such as radio announcers who may be on air at the time and local suburban papers which may be scheduled to go to print just as you address the media.

Ensure you send embargoed copies of your media release to these outlets, so they can prepare stories in advance, but which will only be published or broadcast after your event is over.

On the day of the event it is standard practice to call the various media outlets to confirm that they have received your material and assess whether they may or may not attend.

As a general rule, when media who earlier confirmed their attendance are running late, hold off the formalities for 10 to 15 minutes to give the media time to arrive. Television may take some time to set up lights etc. Be patient and assist where possible. After all they don't have to attend your function and any hostility shown to the media can determine the type of treatment your story might receive.

When formalities are over, the media may want to interview your chief spokesperson. This could involve an "all-in" media conference in which a host of journalists fire questions at your main talent or it could involve "one off" interviews with individual media outlets.

Always be prepared to handle other media queries after your event is over. You may find afternoon radio programs may want to follow-up on the brief interviews which they may have heard during the midday news services. This means you should keep your mobile phone on or be available to news organisations throughout the remainder of the day.

Reactive stories may even continue the day after your event. Always make yourself accessible. The journalist you refuse to talk to may one day be vital to your communication needs.



ADD VALUE TO YOUR MEDIA EVENT

Those who establish good relationships with the media usually adopt an extremely cooperative approach whenever possible.

This means you should give some thought to the environment which you will make available to the media.

Remember television will primarily be interested in pictures.

Always think of ways in which you can make the job of a television crew or photographer so much easier. This may involve the organisation of a visual display or event. In other words, think pictures.

Make sure backdrops and lecterns are adorned with your corporate or organisational logo. You could have a banner made up which can be hung behind you whenever you deliver a speech or conduct a television interview.



NEWS EVENTS AND THE NEED TO BE FLEXIBLE

The trouble with a news conference is that you will usually pick a time that suits you. Then you find that the media are all committed elsewhere at the time of your choosing. So be consultative.

Sometimes it is not possible to change your time. For instance, it may be an official opening, a keynote address etc.

In this case, try to make the "talent" available at another time: for instance, a couple of hours after the opening or the keynote address . . . even beforehand.

So long as the interview occurs on the same day as the event, it doesn't really matter when, because TV news will not generally be reporting the story until that evening, and the newspapers may not report until next day. In the case of a recorded radio interview, you can do the interview beforehand on the understanding that the radio station embargoes it until after the event.

Remember, it may be good time management to schedule a news conference at a time which suits everyone on your team. But there is nothing quite so futile in life as organising a media conference to which no media come!

In many cases, it is not necessary to tie the media down to a set time and place.

There is no need to try to schedule a time and place for such a communications exercise.

Simply prepare your release:

Release it by fax.

Target media to contact to advise of your story.

Be flexible enough to do interviews at a time which suits the media. In other words, always try to make covering a story as easy as possible for the media - not necessarily for you.



ARTICLES

You may be asked to write an article about your project. It is not dissimilar from writing a news release. Follow these simple guidelines:

- Ten to 12 paragraphs are enough.
- Think of a headline.
- Keep your lead paragraph - your introduction - short and to the point.
- Sub editors, if they can't fit in the whole story, tend to cut from the bottom.



FINAL CHECKLIST

Action	Done (✓)
News Release written	
News Release approved	
News Alert written	
Newspaper picture opportunities available	
What vision available for TV?	
Focus on major point/grab to get across in interviews	
Logistical arrangements in place ie. lectern, banner, etc	
Opportunities for magazines, newsletters, etc?	
News Alert released	
Follow-up phone calls to key media	
Sufficient time available in diary for interviews?	



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Media Texts & Reference Guides

There are a number of useful text books and guides available but a good basis to start from is one which provides a comprehensive overview of the wider strategies utilised by Public Relations companies. For example:

The Essentials of Public Relations: Strategies & Tactics
Harper Collins Collage Publishers
Wilcox D, Ault P, Agee W, Cameron G. 2001

In addition to the range of text books which provide more information on the “how to” of media and public relations, your organisation will benefit from a media guide that provide the “who to” answers as well.

Margaret Gees’ Media Guide is commonly referred to as the “bible” of media distribution as it contains all national media outlets from television, radio, newspapers, magazines and much more. It is available in hard copy for approximately \$500 and can also be provided in electronic format as well. The resource is updated every 6 months. Visit www.mediaguide.com.au for more information.

Useful Websites

<http://envision.ca/templates/blank.asp?ID=2487>
<http://www.absolutewrite.com>
<http://www.write.co.nz>
<http://www.internetnewsbureau.com/tips/>

Educational Courses

Workers Educational Association of SA (WEA) offers a two-day Freelance Journalism Course. The two-day program covers all the basics to researching, writing and constructing a story. The course costs \$71 and more information can be obtained by visiting www.wea-sa.com.au

TAFE South Australia offers an Advanced Diploma of Arts Bachelor of Journalism (Professional Writing). This is a very comprehensive course and takes some 4 years to complete part-time. More information can be found at www.tafe.sa.gov.au



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Pro-bono Assistance

Recruiting Professional Services of already trained and experienced practitioners is another volunteering opportunity with your organisation.

Target a professional journalist, writer or media practitioner to volunteer their time to draft media releases, set up media conferences, utilise contacts and train others in the organisation. It may be as simple as a few hours a month and builds on the knowledge that a great percentage of professionally qualified people would be keen to volunteer their time but are wary of committing to tasks they feel are outside of their scope or comfort zone.

Journalism Students/Graduates could also be another great asset to your organisation's volunteer pool. Professional writing graduates need to develop a written portfolio and are keen to obtain real life work experience, so the relationship could be of benefit to both parties. The University of South Australia (Magill Campus) offers degrees in both journalism and public relations, with students required to undertake work experience placements during their studies.

Distribution

Distribution Services such as Australian Associated Press (AAP) will distribute your media release or alert to your preferred media sources either by fax or email for a set fee structure.

AAP is the largest media distribution company in Australia and their network includes major metropolitan, rural papers, industry journals, radio & television in all states around Australia. For more information and a quote on the coverage you wish to achieve visit www.aap.com.au

In House distribution will save your organisation the expense of distributing through service providers such as AAP. In order to achieve this effectively, it is very important for your organisation to develop its own relevant Media Database.

This should consist of contact details for; Industry Journal editors, local and regional paper journalists, relevant writers for the statewide papers and any relevant radio and TV reporters.

The list must be maintained and kept short and targeted. This is also a good step toward developing a relationship with these journalists.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Monitoring

Self-Monitoring is the most cost effective way of recording your media exposure. Simply subscribe to industry publications and newspapers that will feature stories relating to your organisation, then take media clippings and file these for future reference.

Monitoring Services can provide professional monitoring of all print, television and radio coverage but charge either on a retainer or per “hit” and can result in a sizable bill for small organisations with tight budgets.

Media Monitors & Rehome are the two major media monitoring companies in South Australia. By providing key words that match your topic, these companies will monitor and analyse all media exposure relevant to you around the clock.

For further information and a cost quote relevant to your organisation’s needs visit www.mediamonitors.com.au or www.rehome.com.au

Valuing Your Coverage

Measurement & Valuation of the coverage you receive may be relevant to board papers or post event reports. The generally accepted ratio for coverage obtained in newspapers is a multiple of three times what it would cost you to place an advertisement of the same size.

The methodology for valuing your coverage is simple. Measure the column centimetres of print space you obtained and refer to the advertising rates for that publication. Then times the advertisement value by three.

For example if it was going to cost you \$24.35 per column centimetre to place an ad and you obtained two columns each of 10cm in length then the formula would be $\$24.35 \times 10 \times 2 = \487 . Then the cost of the advertisement space $\$487 \times 3 = \1461 . This is the industry standard multiplier effect for valuing editorial coverage.

