

How to get media coverage

From The CLEAR GUIDE v1, written by Les Robinson for Mission Australia March 2009

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Getting media coverage is all about having a good story. Here's how to put one together and bring it to journalist's attention.

1) Start with a real event

Activities, launches and public events are good ways to get media coverage. News is all about current events and happenings. It's about *someone doing something today*.

If children's issues are in the headlines, you can often easily piggy back on them because the media will be looking for local "colour" ie (story, photos or footage) to illustrate the issues or solutions.

If nothing has happened lately it will be necessary to create an event in order to get your story told!

2) Have a photo opportunity

There is often a lot of competition for the news pages. The stronger your photo opportunity, the greater the chance of getting covered. Think emotion and drama: local children getting inoculations, for instance, can illustrate broad child health issues.

3) Have a human focus

"Literacy is a problem" might sound like a good story, but a better story is: "Mums take their children's futures in their own hands". That is, people doing something.

The human element is vital and the central drama of a good story should be the experiences, joys, tribulations, triumphs, discoveries or views of actual people.

4) Have a strong "angle"

Here are a few typical story angles to keep in mind:

- local heroes named;
- genuinely novel, surprising or amazing discoveries or facts;
- progress with an unexpected, original or innovative solution;
- they said it couldn't be done;
- locals working together;
- heart-warming involvement of kids or animals (photos essential).

5) Have a credible source

Assertions without supporting evidence aren't believable to journalists or their readers and viewers. Suspensions, opinions and hearsay are not "stories".

You need to build your story around a “smoking gun”: an eye witness interview, an official report, a new scientific study, photographs, an independent expert, a respected commentator. The exception to this rule is anything said by senior politician, celebrity or business mogul. This generally constitutes a “good story” without the need for supporting evidence.

6) Put all this together in a media release

A media release should have these elements:

[GRAPHIC DESIGNER...make arrows going to the sample press release]

A letterhead ----->

A date ----->

An attention-grabbing headline----->

A WHAT-WHO-WHEN-WHERE opening paragraph that summarises the core of the story----->

Real quotations----->

Authoritative source----->

Fits on one page----->

Contact details----->

Blacktown Parents Group

MEDIA RELEASE

6 August

Good food hits the spot

Blacktown mums are learning saving money with healthy lunches and, much to their surprise, their kids are loving it.

Marcie Rowe didn't think much about her kids lunches. She just bought them the packaged processed foods she thought they'd eat. She was surprised to find out how much that was costing her, and how much it was affecting her children's behaviour and health.

"I was spending over \$50 a week on processed foods and was shocked to find out how much salt, sugar and fat they contained", she said after attending a parenting skills workshop put on by the Blacktown Parents Group.

"Now I've found out how easy it was to cut up some cheese and

vegies as finger foods. At first the kids didn't like it. But I took the advice from the workshop and just kept providing it at home until they got used to it. It only took about a week. Now it's easy to include in their lunches."

Marcie is now much more confident she's doing the right thing for her kids health, and she's saved around \$10 per week.

Missy Higgins, nutritionist, who ran the workshop said that parents are often not aware how easy it is to change their kids eating behaviour.

"Parents try a few times, then get into an argument with their kids and give up. The secret is just to keep making the food available and not pressuring the kids into eating it," she said.

The next workshop is on 26 April and the group is taking bookings.

For more info, contact Nicola Quinn 0487 234 897

7) Talk directly to journalists

BEFORE you send the media release, talk directly to journalists or editors. Check in local papers and spot the names of journalists who deal with family issues. When you've got the media release ready, call them. Tell them about the story - and the photo opportunity - and offer to fax them the media release.

If a journalist does a good job, call them and thank them. It will help build your relationship.

Useful resources

Working the Media, a short, easy guide to using the media, can be downloaded in full from:

www.enablingchange.com.au/Working_the_media.pdf