



# How to Write a Media Release

## A Guide for Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups

Use this guide to assist your group to develop a media release.

### Media release example and tips

**MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 14.12.11**

## Sustainable Neighbourhoods become pros with promotion!

In a record for community groups, Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhoods are leading the way with marketing practices, getting a huge number of messages into the media and having swathes of journalists lapping at their heels!

Sustainable Neighbourhood volunteer, Joe Bloggs is thrilled with the recent media interest. "With so many good stories to tell, it is no wonder that newspapers are keen to spread the word" Mr Bloggs said. "Our group has 15 new members thanks to a story about our radish pickling workshop."

Recent marketing training workshops have boosted each neighbourhood group's marketing prowess, with 74 newspaper articles published in the last two weeks across the region.

Members of Sustainable Neighbourhood groups consist of 35% of the Lake's population, showing an increasing trend in citizens becoming responsible for their environmental impact and having a commitment to improving their local areas. This percentage is a leading figure for environmental action in council areas worldwide; a newsworthy topic by any standards.

For more information on any of the 18 Sustainable Neighbourhoods across the City, contact so-and-so on this number.

-ends-

**Media contact: so-and-so on 0400 111 111**

Note. The above is an entirely fictional article for training for demonstration purposes only. Do not reproduce any of its contents.

Always put the date of release at top of your media release. If you don't want your story published before a certain date, write "embargoed" and then the date it can be printed.

Make your headline snappy and to the point of the story. A maximum of 5 – 7 words is best.

The first line establishes basis of story and the 'hook' or angle of interest, so the editor reading it becomes enraptured.

The next paragraph expands on this statement still attempting to hold interest of editor / reader. Make paragraphs short with double spacing between.

Always include a quote from a relevant person.

You can 'hide' the real point you wanted to promote in the text with the main article emphasis on the headlined media angle.

Always indicate the conclusion of the article.

Always give a contact person and mobile number for the media to call to interview further or arrange a photo shoot.

communities working together



## Newsworthy versus human interest

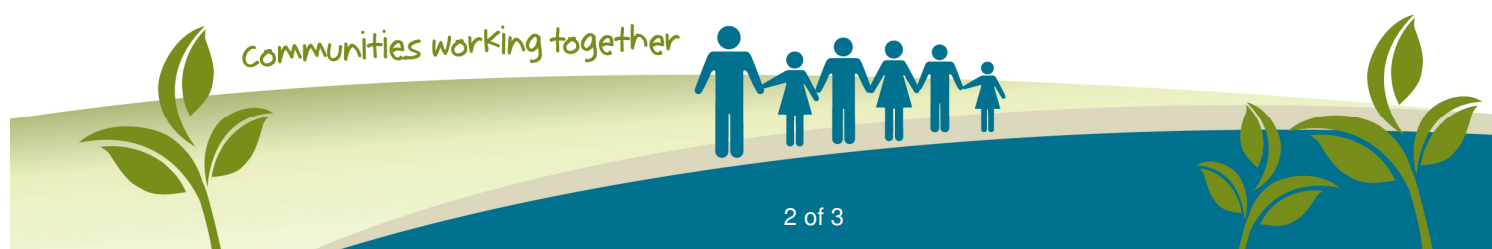
Media stories are usually either newsworthy or human interest. Newsworthy stories are highly sought after by journalists. To be newsworthy, your story needs to have some relevance to current events. The opposite of this is a story that is purely human interest. A human interest story is usually a personal story about a subject matter that does not relate to anything in the current events of society. (For example, Sarah has two decades experience as a volunteer.)

A newsworthy story always needs an angle. An angle is the slant on the story that links it to current affairs. For example, a training company wishes to promote their success in gaining high numbers of apprentices this year. This by itself is human interest. But with the angle of “NSW has a skills shortage fuelled by the retiring workforce – new apprentice numbers fill gap” and you have a very newsworthy story that any journalist will jump on, especially if the topic is fresh / large scale / in a slow news week.

Remember you are selling the idea for this story to a very busy and savvy journalist.

### Turning ‘human interest’ into ‘news’ – Examples for Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups

Story Idea	Angle To Become More ‘Newsworthy’	Photo Idea
Clean Up Australia Day action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of tonnes removed last year, saved endangered turtles/swans/fish/penguins rare to area</li><li>• Link to relevant organisation eg Take 3 comments on global marine debris crisis can be positively affected by street clean-ups</li><li>• Link to alternative concept: Dudley residents are fitter and healthier – clean up has exercise benefit, natural areas are cleaner for air/water quality</li><li>• Kids becoming responsible citizens by taking part</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Person standing in water with turtle/swan/penguin in background</li><li>• Photo of great Pacific rubbish Gyre</li><li>• Group of residents in exercise clothes with gloves and bags at litter site in bushland/beach environment</li><li>• Group of children pumping fists in air with rubbish bags in hand on clean beach</li></ul>
Launch of SNAP	Link items in SNAP to larger picture of local area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• farmers sharing produce assists less fortunate or saves money</li><li>• elders sharing recipes passes on tradition to youth</li><li>• new walkway paths support parents pram fitness groups</li><li>• cycleways keep kids safe</li></ul> Or if you have a local resident with a relevant interesting story they’re willing to tell...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Farmer with mound of colourful fresh veggies</li><li>• Youngsters smiling at grandma-figure over bottles of relish</li><li>• Outdoor pic of several mums and babes in prams</li><li>• Group of children on pushbikes and scooters on bike path</li></ul>
Next meeting coming up	Main story has focus about a past success or current project and makes mention of next meeting and that residents are invited to bring ideas for suburb/action/issues etc.	Relevant to main success story
Landcare works undertaken in the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Link to the bigger picture, eg forest corridors, health of lake or ocean, the survival of a particular plant or animal species and its importance to us</li><li>• focus on the finer detail, eg does an active member have an interesting story to tell? A disability overcome, generations of family involved in Landcare, retiree staying active, social aspect, etc?</li></ul>	Smiling person knee-deep in plants on the Landcare site



## Tips for success

- Try to keep your media release to one page .
- Use a standard font like arial or times roman in size 12pt.
- Call the newspaper ahead of time and ask for the editors name, email address and phone number. Send your release personally addressed to the editor.
- Check when the newspaper's submission deadlines are and submit 3 days ahead of it.
- Always give one follow-up call to the editor a day after sending in your media release. Check they received your story okay and ask if they need any more details. This can be a good way to jog their memory of your story and prompt action.
- Sending a photo with your release can increase its chances of getting published. Try to make the photo an interesting composition and as professional a standard as possible.
- With smaller newspapers particularly, your group could benefit from becoming on familiar terms with the journalist or editor. A note of caution: as a general rule, do not say anything to a journalist that you would not want printed.
- When considering story ideas, think about the big picture. What may be genuinely great news to your group (eg putting up a new noticeboard at the shops) may not be as big a deal to the media. Think, if this were in The Australian, how would it rate? A smaller story may be better off being held back until it can be 'beefed up' with other news.
- Describe the who, what, when, where and why of your story.

## Checklist

- ☐ Date is at top of release
- ☐ Headline of 5 – 7 words
- ☐ Body copy kept to one page maximum, angle is addressed
- ☐ End of release declared
- ☐ Media contact person is added
- ☐ Editor is emailed the release and photo
- ☐ Editor is phoned as a follow-up
- ☐ Edition of newspaper checked to review article coverage and article saved in scrapbook

Sustainable Neighbourhoods is an initiative of Lake Macquarie City Council



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