

USING THE MEDIA

The media can be an extremely helpful ally. A well-timed story on issues concerning Native Title, reconciliation, the Stolen Generations, or Indigenous disadvantage can have a significant impact in a political campaign. A well-written and researched story can gain community support - support which can be used to lobby politicians and candidates.

If your group is intending to make contact with the local media there are a few important points to remember.

1. Check first with your ANTaR State office or the ANTaR National Office about what information you want to send to the media. In any media campaign it is important to maintain consistency about what is being said, to which media and by whom.
2. Always provide a contact name and phone/facs/email details of a member of your group with whom the media can discuss the issues in your release.
3. For the names of local press and radio outlets, their addresses, phone/facs numbers and names/positions of staff, check the Margaret Gee *Media Guide* (which will be in the reference section of your local Council library). This guide is published annually and will give you lots of useful information.
4. Timing of your release is important and the *Media Guide* will give you publication deadlines for the media in which you are interested. If you find your local paper publishes on a Wednesday make sure your release gets there in plenty of time for the media to follow up with you before their deadline.
5. If you are targeting radio programs, check the Media Guide for the name of the show's producer and ring them to let them know you are sending a release – they may wish to do an on-air interview on the subject matter.
6. If you wish to do a news release to a number of media outlets, for a charge (around \$120) AAP Information Services' *Media Net* (phone 02 9322 8000) will distribute your release to those outlets you wish to target.

Using Talkback Radio

Talkback radio is big. Daytime radio shows with the biggest audiences are talkback. Evening shows with talkback segments rate highly. John Howard uses both the Alan Jones' and the John Laws' programs as his major media outlets. It's vital that people with positive points of view on Indigenous affairs are heard on these programs. This is important work. Often callers will be very quick to criticize particular Indigenous events or policies – about which most callers will know nothing. It is vital that your supportive voice is heard.

If you go on such shows you'll only be given a very short time to talk so plan your points and plan for a few only. Use the ANTaR Election Kit to help generate what you want to say.

When you call talkback remember a couple of things:

- You are talking to one person; of course there is more than one person listening but each is an individual. Just imagine yourself talking to one person – not the whole of Australia.
- Turn your own radio off when you are waiting to go on. When you can hear the program through the phone – and that will be well before you go to air – that's the time to switch your own radio off. You will hear what callers before you are saying through your phone so you won't miss out on anything by switching your own radio off. With it off, you won't get delayed feedback from your own radio once you're on air.
- Radio can be anonymous – one of its problems, as scurrilous things can be said, but useful if you're a reluctant speaker or shy.

How to write a news release

First, thoroughly familiarise yourself with the types and styles of stories that interest your chosen media outlets, or – in the case of radio – the types of programs they broadcast, before you start writing your news release.

These are basics for writing news releases:

- Write short sentences
- Write short paragraphs (for radio no more than 30 words in each)
- Write always from a positive perspective, using positive words and phrases
- Indicate that your item is a “News Release” and date it clearly
- A good headline for your story can catch an editor’s eye
- Your first paragraph is the most crucial one so it should contain the strongest points. When sub editors shorten a news story they usually cut from the bottom up so don’t put essential information too far down your news release
- Essential information includes what happened or will happen, where, why it has or will occur, how, when and to whom. Your introductory paragraph might summarise this essential information and the remaining paragraphs expand on the details
- Make sure that the contact person whose name and phone/facs/email details appears on the news release is familiar with the content, will be readily available (provide them with a mobile phone?) and can answer questions. Include ANTaR’s full name as the organization on whose behalf the news release is being issued
- Use quotes where possible – journalists like snappy, original statements but make sure you attribute the statements to a particular person (yourself if necessary), or to ANTaR if appropriate (and you’ve got ANTaR’s OK)
- Try to keep your news release to no more than one page, typed and double spaced

Writing a “Letter to the editor”

The most read part of any newspaper is the letters section. A letter to the editor is a good way for showing support for an indigenous issue or for raising a public debate. Politicians gauge support for an issue from the letters pages.

Some key points for getting your letter published:

- Keep it short and simple (no more than 250 words)
- If you can, relate it to a previous story, letter, editorial or feature which the paper published (make some imaginative links if necessary)
- Plan your first sentence carefully - if it is dull the editor may read no further; if it’s catchy you’re in with a chance
- A simple letter pattern is to state:
 - what you support or disagree with
 - what evidence or examples you can offer to support your view
 - what can be done about it
 - (this is just to get started but don’t confine yourself to this)
- A simple letter pattern is to state:

Make sure you sign and print your name and include your address and phone number so the Editor can verify the letter.

Generally only one letter in ten or more gets published. If yours doesn’t make it the first time don’t give up. Keep writing and eventually you’ll end up in print.