

## HOW TO WRITE A MEDIA RELEASE

Media releases are often the first point of contact media organisations have with a story, event or issue. It is important that you get your message across clearly - it has to catch the attention of the editor/journalist despite being in competition with hundreds of other media releases that arrive in the news room each day. As many as 95% of media releases are binned or deleted on arrival in the news room. Think of your media release as an invitation to the media to take a closer look at your story.

Structure your media release as you would prepare for an interview: keep it simple and to the point, using only 2 or 3 major points (prioritised) and run it through the following checklists:

### **Newsworthy checklist (any one of the following):**

- Timeliness – is it happening now?
- Proximity – is it local?
- Prominence – does it involve someone the majority of people know of?
- Impact – who will the story interest or target?
- Magnitude – how big is it in the scale of daily events?
- Conflict – is it about disaster or dispute – if so...think twice about using the media!
- Oddity – is there a bizarre angle to it?

### **Angle checklist (answer all of the following):**

- Why is the issue so important?
- Who else would be interested in it?
- Why would they be interested in it?
- How much coverage has the issue already had?
- What is new about it?

### **Additional checks:**

- Have I got the facts and figures to back it up?
- Am I the most appropriate spokesperson? If not, who is and are they willing to do an interview?
- Is the spokesperson available for media interviews for 24 hours after the media release goes out?
- Can I provide photos, a photo opportunity or a suitable location for a TV interview if necessary?

### **Golden rules of media release writing**

1. No more than one page long;
2. No more than two sentences per paragraph and no more than 10 paragraphs;
3. Always put your most important information in the top three paragraphs;
4. Keep quotes for expressing opinion – statements are based on facts;
5. Use block paragraphs
6. Always present your media release in type –handwritten is not acceptable;
7. When introducing the spokesperson – title before name eg. OFP chair, Christine Wood;
8. When using acronyms, always write in full when first eg. Orana Fabulous Productions (OFP);
9. When you put a contact on the bottom of your release – ensure that person is available for at least 24 hours after the release has been distributed;
10. Always follow up your media release – never assume it will be used.

<b>Letterhead</b>	<h1>Orana Fabulous Productions</h1>
<b>Media release</b>	<b>Contact: (02) 6847 0559</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>MEDIA RELEASE</b> <b>7 May 2005</b>
<b>Headline</b> <i>Write this last!</i>	<b>National theatre debut for Narromine Theatre</b>
<b>First (lead) paragraph</b>	The national debut of the latest production by Sydney-based theatre company, Wilton Productions, will be held at Narromine Theatre in August.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> par – explains lead</b>	Regional presenter group, Orana Fabulous Productions (OFP) will host the show, titled Drought Busters.
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> par – introduces spokesperson</b>	OFP chair, Christine Wood, said this was a momentous event in the development of theatre production in the region.
<b>1<sup>st</sup> quote</b>	“We only recently formed in the interest of more cohesive efforts to bring quality performing arts to the region,” she said. “To have a production of this calibre booked is a credit to the dedication of our volunteers. <i>(Note here the quote is not closed, because you’re about to open the next paragraph with a quote. Only close the quote when you move on to a statement.)</i> ”
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> quote</b>	“Wilton Productions has a long history of presenting accessible productions, which regional audiences have always enjoyed. We believe that Drought Busters will be no different – it has a potent narrative and it also involves actors from the region, which should be an additional drawcard.”
<b>Statement</b>	Ms Wood said that for the past year her management team had been working closely with Wilton Productions on the logistics of debuting a performance in the region.
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> quote</b>	“It is an honour to be hosting a national debut and the fact that Narromine is the chosen venue is very exciting for that community.”
<b>Statement</b>	Drought Busters has its national debut at Narromine Theatre on 16 August. Tickets will be available from the Orana Fabulous Productions box office at Narromine Theatre from 1 July.
<b>ENDS.</b>	ENDS.
Contact details (usually only for media follow up)	For more information contact Christine Wood on (02) 6847 0559 Media contact: Kim Goldsmith on (02) 6887 9262 or 0419 439 923

**Final checklist (answer all of the following):**

- Does it answer who, what, when, where, why and how?
- Does it have a date at the top?
- Is the lead paragraph attention grabbing? Does it sell the story?
- Does the second paragraph give some background or history to the story?
- Does the third paragraph introduce the spokesperson, with working title first, no personal title and full name?
- Is there a contact name and accurate phone numbers at the bottom of the release?

For more information refer to the fact sheets on *Media strategy*, *10 tips for the media spokesperson*, and *Media risk management* located at [oranaarts.com](http://oranaarts.com) under Resources.

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