

## Media and direct action – handout – Beeliar campaign Jan 2017

Getting media attention is not the sole objective of an action, but it can be a way to help achieve the objective. Media is the means to communicate something to someone. Always take the time to work out what you're trying to say, and who you're saying it to.

### The eight aspects of news-iness

**Impact ...** A big event/announcement that will affect or involves many people.

**Conflict ...** Tension between groups/ideas. Community debate, a struggle against the elements, machines v people, the drama of sneaking in, police, passion, tears and physical danger.

**Timeliness...** The importance of when the information is disseminated. Is something about to happen that will change things? A pending decision? A court case? A new Bill or regulation? A major meeting?

**Proximity...** Has the thing happened within or is it relevant to a media organisation's circulation area?

**Prominence...** A person/event/issue that is widely recognisable on a local, state or national basis.

**Currency...** controversy, trends, a response to something that has recently happened. Related to, but not quite the same as timeliness.

**Human Interest...** An angle or close-up story that people will connect to: personal stories, animal stories, backgrounds.

**The unusual...** Can relate to an incident, point of view, lifestyle etc – common denominator is that the piece is out of the ordinary and often surprisingly so.

### Tips for writing media releases

- Summarise everything in the first two lines, include the drama, and who, what, where and why.
- Keep to one idea, and one page. Don't jam too many angles or info in to one release.
- Who is your audience? What motivates your audience and what ideas, concepts, language do they respond to? Figure out what you want the reader/viewer to *do* after hearing the story.
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short, use evocative words and avoid jargon
- If you have more detailed information you want to give, stick it on the next page as "Background"
- Should you broadcast your release or target particular journalists first? Is there someone who has written on the issue in the past, has the background knowledge and is likely to write a story?

### Anticipating media response and understanding the landscape

- How has your issue been reported in the past? Are there prejudices, or misconceptions that you need to get around or shift? Are there words or phrases that frame the issue in ways you want to avoid?
- Do the words you are using give your audience a chance to agree with you?
- They won't keep reporting the same story over and over – there needs to be progression, conflict, new angles and different stories.

### The media and direct action Golden Rules

- **Never explain how you did it** (talk about *why* you did it, and the effect you're having)
- **Never forget that they are watching you:** all of you are on stage, and everything you do will be taken to represent the issue more broadly. Be in character.

- **Keep the smoking, eating, swearing and joking for later, after the cameras are gone.** Do not have arguments with cops and workers while cameras are around. Do not talk about tactics while cameras are around. Be aware of yours and others presentation. You don't need to wear a suit, but save t-shirts with drugs or wearing on them for another day.
- **If you can't think of what to say, read your media release** (no good for on camera!).
- **Don't look at the camera while doing an interview. Look at the person interviewing you.** If you are in a media scrum, answer questions and maintain eye contact with just once person so you aren't swinging all over the place. It is okay to say "sorry, can I start that again?" and begin your quote again (unless you are on live!) Don't forget, you can ask if it's a live interview.
- **Stay focused:** each sentence has to communicate your message. They will cut and edit your interview, and if you babbled about something else, they might use that and you will have missed your chance. If they ask you something you don't want talk about, practice how to *acknowledge the question and use a bridge* to something you want to say (see below)
- **Elect a spokesperson who knows what they're talking about.** BUT it is better to say "sorry, I don't know the answer to that question," than to make shit up. \*In this campaign, there is such a variety of technical information that no one could be across it all. If they ask you about the detailed economics of the project, or the alternative harbour proposals... suggest **"You can talk to other people in the campaign about that detail. (break)** I'd like to talk about why I am here... your statement
- **Journalists are not your friends** – they just want to tell a story. Don't give them information you don't want everyone to know. Don't let your guard down.
- **Everyone is responsible** Sometimes media liaison can't cover all the ground. If you see media turn up and don't see an obvious media liaison person, go up, politely introduce yourself and ask them if you'd like to find them a liaison person or spokesperson. Be mindful of shots they are taking – for example don't let them wander around unaccompanied in blockade camps or places we organise. If you see them filming rubbish pick it up. If you see them approaching people you can see they want to interview for only sensationalist reasons, ask them if you can help. Make sure banners are up and "stage manage" where possible so messages are displayed in background.

## Interviewing

- Speak slowly and clearly in short sentences. You want to speak in pithy quotes, not like a normal person. They will look through the footage for "grabs" so take breath breaks after pithy clauses and sentences (ie. If you just keep saying "and... and... and..." they may find it hard to edit, and give up on the story.)
- Don't be afraid to ask to say something again – they want a good grab and you want to sound good too. If it's not live, just say "Sorry, can I answer that question again?"
- Be legal, decent, honest and truthful.
- Have media release in front of you in case you get stuck.
- Don't be afraid to take your time, ask them what they mean if you're confused or tell them you'll get back to them once you've thought about it.
- In this campaign, its fine not to know all the technical detail... Ie, if they ask a complex technical question about the outer harbour, or political detail: "Other people in the campaign can speak to that detail. (break) What I am here to talk about is...."
- Avoid all jargon and abbreviations
- Know the facts and get a key message/messages that you will repeat to get the message across.
- Practice how to *acknowledge and bridge* if you get a curly question. This can include using a phrase or word from the question, or saying "I'm glad you asked me that..."
- If you are asked something you really don't want to answer, try to move it back to something you are interested in. (Or don't accept the question, like politicians)...ie... "The real concern here is XXXX"

- **Like politicians do, answer the question you want to answer – they can only use what you give them.**

### **Acknowledge and bridge – some examples (or how to pivot)**

*“Aren’t you creating a dangerous situation for innocent workers? “**The dangerous situation here has been created by the Barnett government who are putting the community at risk with their reckless mentality – pushing through a toll road, before an election, without any care for the communities at risk of asbestos, dust, and loss of their local environment”**”*

**People are saying that you are wasting taxpayers money to the tune of \$40 000 a day – what do you say to that?**

*“The real concern is the huge amount of money being wasted by this reckless proposal - \$1.9 billion that will be wasted on a toll road to nowhere. There is no business plan, and no proper planning for the next stage/s of the proposed project. We are calling on the government to cease work until the election and prioritise the health concerns of the community.”*

### **EXAMPLES FOR WETLANDS DEFENDERS**

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#### **WHY ARE YOU HERE TODAY?**

**Think of a line that explains why you are here. You can get a message across and still be authentic.**

*“I’m here today standing in solidarity with Noongar people – as their sacred sites are being threatened. The government has been irresponsible with aboriginal sites, the environment, other local residents, dust and asbestos. We are the only thing left holding them to account”*

*“I’m a concerned local resident taking action where the government have failed this community.”*

*“I can’t stand by and watch this destruction, I had to take action – I feel I am being a responsible citizen, when the government who is supposed to look after our health and welfare, are the ones putting lives at risk”*

#### **POINTS OF ATTACK (this is for you to prepare for obvious responses)**

##### **Acknowledge/bridge, Pivot**

**You are all professional protestors.**

*“If by professionals you are talking about the accountants, nurses, lawyers, doctors and architects that are taking annual leave to defend this bushland, then yes, there are professionals here.”*

*“There are concerned community members, residents who have been protecting this area for three decades.”*

*“Whether a young (student/environmentalist/concerned local) like myself, or a Professor with five decades experience in academia, or a local family who want safe bushland for their kids to play in, we have one thing in common – a love for this special place, and a call for the government to stop the destruction before the election.”*

*Depends on the tone/interviewee as to how you can respond... if you can get away with it..*

“Well, we are very concerned about safety, monitoring and advocating compliance for actual environmental laws, unlike the government, so we are glad you are acknowledging we are going about things professionally”

“It would be great if the politicians on \$200k+ salaries would actually be professional and follow their own laws and regulations. “

“It shouldn’t be up to the community to be fulfil politician’s professional responsibilities in protecting the environment. I think we would all like to see a bit more professionalism around here.”

(bit more tongue in cheek for a JJJ hack kinda audience)

### **You are wasting tax payers money/Hasn’t this gone far enough? Aren’t you wasting your time and resources**

Pivot to the similar – “We do think tax payer’s money is being wasted – 1.9 billion on a toll road to nowhere.”

Also, it’s a terrible waste of resources for the community to deal with this destruction for a road project that may be shelved after the election.

### **You are breaking the law!**

Peaceful nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience has a long and proud history. We have peaceful protest to thank for our south west national parks, the franklin river not being dammed, Jabiluka not being mined and James Price Point not being destroyed. We have voting rights for women and aboriginal people because of peaceful protest.

The government is not always right. They are not even following their own laws, so it’s up to the community to act ethically where they are not, and do what its right.

### **OTHER GENERAL TALKING POINTS (See “Taking action” sheet for more talking points and stats)**

"This is an unnecessary road - and building it is a huge waste of taxpayer dollars."

"Government sometimes gets things wrong; it is the duty of the people to peacefully intervene in wrong-headed policy".

"When the government acts unaccountably, it is up to citizens to hold them to account and say enough is enough".

“It’s a toll road to nowhere”

"The government should stop all clearing and LET US VOTE"

### **TWEETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

Send the media team pictures to tweet and post on facebook with updates from tree sits and other lock ons

Every person who is planning on being an arrestable lock on should provide a portrait picture (we can take a nice one of you) and your age, occupation, (if relevant) and a one sentence quote... “I am here today because.... Or I’m taking action because...”

Adapted with thanks, from G Woods hand out, by N Paris