

A GUIDE TO: LOCAL PRESS RELEASES

A good press release is one of the most effective ways of generating media coverage for Napo’s campaigns and successes. Whether it be promoting the good work of the service and the union or informing the public of the dangers in a change of policy; publicity can play a vital role in keeping Napo relevant, recruiting new members and could help influence employers and politicians.

With journalists receiving hundreds of press releases each day, you need to make sure yours stands out from the rest.

Timing is Everything

In this world of 24-hour news, journalists and news agencies always need up-to-date information. The best time to send a press release is as soon as a decision has been made or immediately before the event you are publicising is taking place. If you want the press to know in advance about an event which cannot be publicised until a particular date use an embargo.

Tips:

- Always date your press releases.
- If you want the press to attend an event or cover an activity, send the press release a few days earlier.
- Be clear whether the information is for immediate release or to be embargoed until a specific date and time.

Make it Newsworthy

Journalists cannot always see how stories that matter to Napo and its members impact on wider society. For this reason, you need to find an angle that they will buy into. This could include: **human interest** stories (personal experiences, an impact on public safety, how an initiative will help the community); **controversy** (will there be a meeting of people with opposing views? has a report been published that reveals massive failings); **celebrity** (a celeb attending your event not only provides photo opportunities but also bolsters the cause); **local angle** (what does this piece of news mean for the local community?).

Tips

Before drafting a press release ask yourself:

- Is this news?
- Have I found the right angle?

The 5 W’s

The best press releases start off with a short snappy headline and then get to the Five W’s as soon as possible.

Who is this press release about? **What** is happening? **When** is it happening? **Where** is it happening? and **Why**?

If you cannot identify the five W’s in your story, you may need to rethink the angle you have chosen.

Content Rules

Busy journalists will sometimes copy and paste a well written press release into the body of their news story. It is also common practice to ignore information towards the end of a release so you should make sure the most important information is toward the top.

Generally, press releases should be no longer than one side of A4, but if you need to include more information to put your story in context include **Notes to Editors** where you can outline any potential interviewees or pictures available as well as relevant facts and figures.

Always include the name and contact details of someone who can be reached by a journalist for more information.

When writing a press release, always make it clear that you are doing so in your capacity as a Napo member. If a journalist does contact you to follow up on the information they have received and would like to interview you, remind them that you are speaking to them as a Napo member and not an individual or someone working for the service.

Tips:

- The first paragraph should summarise the key points of the story (the five W's).
- Use the second paragraph to add more detail to the story.
- Quotes belong in the third paragraph of the story (one point per quote).
- Paragraph four has extra relevant information.
- Use Notes to Editors to provide more background information.

Building a Press List

Building a press list is an ongoing process and should ideally be underway before you need to send a press release. Scour the web for local journalists that have reported on stories like yours, or visit the library or a newsagents to get a list of publications that cover your geographical area.

Once you have the contact details of the journalists/ publications you would like to contact, find out what their deadlines are and how they prefer to receive their press releases.

If sending something by email, copy and paste the press release into the body of the email rather than sending as an attachment.

If sending a paper copy, make sure it is on proper headed paper, number each page and write **more follows** at the bottom of each page that has a page following.

Always send a copy of your press release to Napo HQ so we can track what is happening in your area.