

LOBBY ELEMENT: MEDIA

- ten points for lobbyists keen to generate supportive media exposure

- Be realistic** Recognise the inherent risks and seductive opportunities involved in encouraging media interest.
- Write it down** Unless the situation is exceptional, write down what you want to say. It can be in the form of notes to yourself for a telephone or radio interview; or a release (containing news), a statement (a response to a previous or current event), an advisory (advertising an event in which you are involved).
- Know yourself** Keep asking yourself "What is special about the message I have to give?"
- Pause if possible** If you get a cold-call from the media asking you to comment on something, do everything to avoid responding then and there. That is high risk territory for mistakes. Offer to call back in a few minutes, end the call, work out something and phone back. Or offer to put your thoughts in writing and E-mail or fax through.
- Appearance counts** If writing a release, focus on key elements:
- One side, 1 ½ space;
 - Ariel lettering style;
 - The first sentence summarising the whole message in 25 words or less; then
 - Factual explanation of the news item and a quote, then
 - Your contact details, preferably a cell-phone.
- Be alert** If the media respond, get back to them fast. They work to tight deadlines. They are generally doing you more of a favour than you are doing them.
- Playing with fire** Before saying anything which might come back to harm you but you feel you must say, establish that you have "*off the record*" status and avoid saying anything that only you could possibly have known or thought. If radio phone, make sure that you are not on a car.
- Know your limits** Don't try and control what the journalist might produce; don't insist at approving something before it is published. If they offer that, fine.
- Don't despair** At the bad moments, when a negative story about you first item in every news broadcast, remember that there is much truth in the assertion that "all publicity is good publicity".
- Your target** A media release etc. which is repeated word for word, prominently, in the media which you have targeted is a bullseye hit!