

Getting Media Coverage of Your Event

Refugee Week is the perfect opportunity to get your organisation or school into the local media. The easiest and most immediate way to draw attention to your event is to have it listed in the "what's on" section of your local newspaper, where you can advertise your event for free. Make sure you ring the newspaper well before the event to find out when their deadline is for this section and what the process is to ensure your event is listed.



Refugee Week is also a great time to get some more extensive coverage of refugee issues and to celebrate the contribution refugees make. Below are some tips on how to get the media to feature your event and/or write about refugee issues.

Figure out what your story is

If you want media coverage you have to find a way to grab a journalist's attention: You need to convince them that you have something newsworthy going on. If you have an enormous event that will bring in hundreds of people from the area, then you immediately have something they will want to cover. However, even if your event is small there are ways to make it interesting.

Consider the following suggestions on how to develop a story angle:

- Pitch your event as being one of hundreds of events going on across the country as part of national Refugee Week. Explain how it shows your community is part of a bigger, country-wide, effort, and that it's important your community's contribution is covered. Make sure you know about any other events that might be going on in your area.
- Enlist the support of refugees in your community. Perhaps identify an individual refugee with an interesting story to tell who is open and chatty and comfortable telling their story. The media love profiling colourful characters, and this person can be the 'local face' of Refugee Week.
- Do the work for them. Journalists are busy so the more information you can provide them with the better. Prepare some local stats and information about refugees in your area. Have contact details, photos and stories from local refugees at the ready, and make sure

you know who is happy to talk to the media and who isn't. You could even write up some of the interviews or refugee profiles yourself.

Decide which media you wish to target

Once you've decided on your story angle you need to decide which media you'd like to approach.

Local media can be divided into print (newspapers and magazines), television and radio. Newspapers and local radio are the easiest to get coverage in. For TV you need something that is visually very strong and/or a charismatic speaker who is comfortable in front of the camera. Whichever media you select, you will need to identify a spokesperson who can talk to the media in detail about your event, organisation and broader refugee issues.

Prepare your media release

The main tool used to approach media is the media release: a one page document providing the essential information you wish to convey. Unfortunately, most releases end up going straight into the bin because they haven't been addressed to the right person or because they have failed to grab the attention of the reader in the first few paragraphs, so it's important to make sure you get your media release right. For details on how to draft your media release, see below.

Make sure you know the deadlines for the different media. How much advance warning do they need? When do you need to send your release? If you send it too early it may just be ignored, but if you send it too late then they'll miss it. Seven to ten days before the event is the norm, but some media may have longer lead times.

Be ready to respond

Make sure the telephone number(s) you provided on the media release are for phones that will always be answered or have answer-machine facilities. If a journalist does call and leave a message, call them back immediately. If you have included the contact details of other people for interview, make sure they are prepared as well.

Follow your media release with a phone call

A day or two after you've sent your press release, follow it with a phone call to whomever you addressed the media release to. Be relaxed and friendly (always make sure they have time to take



your call first) and draw their attention to the release if they haven't opened it yet. Offer to call back at a more convenient time if necessary. *Remember that when you are speaking to a journalist everything you say could be attributed to you and your organisation.*

At the event

If a journalist comes to your event, make sure somebody is assigned to look after them and help them speak to the right people. Be clear about what your event is going to involve and who it is aimed at. Think about what key messages you are trying to get across through your event. If a photographer is coming, check before hand who is happy to have their photo taken and who is not. All participants should be briefed about the arrival of journalists and what that will mean.

If refugees or asylum seekers have agreed to talk to journalists about their experiences, ensure that they are properly briefed and know what to expect. Discuss the implications with them. They may want to remain anonymous rather than use their real name, as it is possible that identifying themselves may put them at risk.



Drafting a media release

Media releases should be short and snappy, use simple language, and be limited to one page only. They should be broken up in the following way:

- Dateline
- Headline
- Lead/Opening Paragraph
- Body
- End
- Contacts/links to more information

Dateline: The date should be included at the top of the release.

Headline: The headline must summarise key points you wish to convey. It must also be interesting enough to catch the attention of your target audience. Aiming for a complete but short sentence is best. Try imagining the headline you'd expect to see in your local paper.

Lead/opening paragraph: The lead is the most important part of the media release and needs to contain the basic information concerning

Who? What? Where? When? Why? In relation to Refugee Week this breaks down as:

- Who:** the name of your organisation
- What:** the event you are hosting
- Where:** the location of the event
- When:** the date and time of the event
- Why:** explanation of event as part of Refugee Week

Body: This section is the place to put more info about your event and Refugee Week. Why are you bothering to hold an event? Why do you think refugee issues are relevant to the community? How does it fit in with Refugee Week more broadly? Start with what's most important, using short sentences and short paragraphs. Include direct and conclusive quotes to illustrate key points, incorporate name and title or position in the organisation of the person quoted. You may spell out the name of the organisation initially, followed by an abbreviation afterwards.

End: The **end** paragraph summarises facts and background information.

Contacts: Always end your media release with the name and contact details of the person the journalist should contact for more information and interviews. It is also worth detailing other information you have which may be of interest to the journalist. For instance, the names and a short descriptive sentence about other people you may have available for interview; photos you might be able to provide, speakers who you think would work particularly well on tv or radio. **If you think your event will make a good photograph, include a note to picture editors, saying when, where and what photos can be taken.**

Arranging radio & television interviews



When a radio or TV journalist rings up and wants to do an interview, find out as much as possible about what they want before you agree to do it. Ask if the interview will be live or pre-recorded. Live interviews are broadcast as you do them and you have to get them right first time. They cannot be edited like pre-recorded interviews.

Think about what you want to say before the interview and practice. Have about three or four key points that you aim to get across. If you are doing a radio interview you can write these on a card and have this with you.

Some good questions to ask prior to the interview include:

- What programme is the interview for?

- Will the interview be used in a news programme, or are you being asked to take part in a discussion or phone-in?
- What questions do they want to ask you?
- Who else will be interviewed?
- How long is the interview?



Yes – it sounds simple. It *is* simple. Most local newspapers will happily run Refugee Week stories but you need to be the first in and put your hand up and say, “please feature us”! You will be surprised at the response you get.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

HEADED PAPER OR NAME/LOGO OF ORGANISER

PRESS RELEASE: NATIONAL REFUGEE WEEK
Wednesday, 3 June 2009

National Refugee Week gets a kick start in Barnsworth as residents lift their heels in a day of international dance

This Saturday, students from Barnsworth High will show they're not shy in coming forward to welcome refugees with a day of international dance at Barnsworth Public High School. The event, which is open to the public, will feature performances and classes led by refugees within the community along with Barnsworth students. It is one of hundreds of events which will be taking place across the country as part of Australia's National Refugee Week, held from June 14-20th this year.

It was Barnsworth High Students themselves who decided they wanted to participate in the festivities and hold an event.

"Refugee Week is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the contribution refugees make to this country and the students of Barnsworth High were very excited about participating," explains Barnsworth High Headmaster, Nigel Slater. "We have a number of students with refugee backgrounds, some of whom are quite accomplished performers. We thought it would be both fun and educational to hold an event that encouraged us to participate a bit in their culture." Activities will incorporate this year's Refugee Week theme, "Freedom from Fear."

The 'Day of Dance' will include salsa classes from a Colombian student refugee, who leads dance classes at *Amigos* restaurant on Thursday evenings, and a performance of traditional Kurdish dance. For those with serious rhythm and a sense of adventure there will also be a Congolese dance workshop. Food from around the world will be on offer to help keep up energy levels.

The event will kick off at 12pm, Sunday 14th June, in the Barnsworth High gymnasium. A small entry fee of \$3 per person will be charged.

Refugee Week aims to give Australians an opportunity to learn more about the personal stories of people who came to Australia as refugees and the contributions they have made to their adopted homeland.

- *For more information about the event or Refugee Week, please contact xxxx on (telephone).*
- *Interviews with refugee dancers/performers can also be arranged, and cameras and videos are welcome but please do contact us before hand to arrange.*
- *Should photographers not be able to attend we have a school photographer who is happy to make images available.*