

The basics....

Timeliness is everything for media, hence the date at the top.

Can you send out your release earlier (under embargo) so outlets with shrinking resources have more time to cover the story or work up an angle?

If you holding an event/stunt then don't wait. Send out an alert 3-7 days prior, and a follow up alert first thing in the morning.

Use the active voice where possible.

Avoid long sentences, clichés, puns, acronyms, exclamation marks, long job titles and jargon.

Don't stress about the headline... as it's not going to be used by anyone else.

DO stress about the first paragraph, as this will determine whether your release is read any further and/or picked up. It must be short and snappy (ideally 25 words or less) and explain the "who" and the "what". In a nutshell, it should convince a journalist that they should give a damn.

Tips

If you are going to distribute a release using external agencies then check whether they charge per page – another reason to keep your release short & snappy. Always avoid an overhanging sentence (or two) on a second page.

If you have too much detail to fit on one page, can you provide the same info in another way? (I.e. factsheet, or backgrounder.)

Where possible, paste the text of the release into the body of an email (as well as attaching it) to make it as easy as possible for journalists.

Finally, do you need to reference any stats/statements? (This can also save journos time, and lend you authority.)

Example 1

Clear, and simple headline. Short intro which is easy to read and explains why there's a story. Also explains terminology/concepts (ie. Antimicrobial resistance)



The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP
Minister for Agriculture

The Hon. Sussan Ley MP
Minister for Health

MEDIA RELEASE

National Strategy to address antibiotic overuse

A new national strategy will aim to reduce the threat of antibiotic resistance following statistics showing Australia's consumption of antibiotics is among the highest in the developed world.

Minister for Health, Sussan Ley, and Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, said Australia's first Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy would address the decreasing effectiveness of antibiotics because of the rise of resistance in disease-causing bacteria.

Antimicrobial resistance occurs when bacteria, viruses, parasites and other disease-causing organisms become resistant to the medicines used to treat the infections they cause.

Ms Ley said in 2013 more than 29 million prescriptions for antibiotics were supplied under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and Repatriation PBS to over 10 million patients or 45 per cent of all Australians.

"The over and misuse of antibiotics has been identified as a significant contributor to the emergence of resistant bacteria," Ms Ley said.

Example 2

Heading is fine, but intro is too long, hard to grasp, passive voice & contains acronym.

Public Health Association of Australia
11 June 2015

New trade agreement to increase cost of medicines

A group of health and community organisations have expressed concerns to the Australian Government about the negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the potential risks they entail for public health. Intellectual property proposals made by Japan and South Korea for the RCEP that would compromise access to medicines in the region are of particular concern.

If it was rewritten... Australian patients are at risk of paying more for medicines under international trade agreement proposals – a threat that's prompted health and community organisations to officially raise concerns with the Prime Minister/Relevant Minister/Department.

Example 3

Simple heading, short and snappy intro that's in active voice. Includes some facts and figures to explain the problem. (But no reference to where the stats are from.)

MINISTER FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS, GAMING AND LIQUOR REGULATION

Crackdown On Private Carpark Operators

Wednesday 10 June 2015



The Andrews Labor Government will introduce new legislation to protect Victorians from misleading and unfair practices by private car park operators.

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Jane Garrett, said some operators in pay and display car parks were issuing unenforceable payment notices which were dressed-up to look like fines.

The Road Safety Amendment (Private Car Park Operations) Bill 2015 (BAC), to be introduced in Parliament today, will abolish the right for car park operators to apply to the courts for access to people's details through VicRoads.

On average each year car park operators request the details of more than 50,000 Victorians so letters of demand can be sent.

These fines can be between \$80 to \$100 per ticket and, if people don't pay these so-called fines, debt collectors are sent after them.

Some Victorians have told the Consumer Action Law Centre that the companies, their lawyers and debt collectors were using harassing tactics in pursuit of questionable demands for payment.

Example 4

If you have an opportunity for vision/photographs then HIGHLIGHT don't hide it like they have! The where/when/what of the op should be highlighted clearly.

UC researcher's medical discovery heading for market

In a University of Canberra first, an international chemical manufacturer has signed a commercialisation agreement to market a new synthetic catalyst developed by a University researcher that will help make the pharmaceutical manufacturing process more efficient.

The deal signed with US chemical company Strem Chemicals Inc. is the University of Canberra's first intellectual property licence for a chemical product that will be sold worldwide.

The catalyst, discovered by associate professor of biomedical sciences Ashraf Ghanem, will be useful in pharmaceutical processing, particularly in the production of the drug Ritalin (methylphenidate), which is used in the treatment of attention deficit disorder and attention deficit hyperactive disorder.

Media opportunity: Dr Ghanem will demonstrate the production of the catalyst in his laboratory (3D41) at 11:00 – 11:30 am TODAY.

Dr Ghanem explained that this synthetic catalyst produces a chemical reaction that allows certain molecules to be extracted with a very high level of purity, reducing the need for additional processing and diminishing the risk of unintended side effects.