

# Engaging with Media



## Understanding your motivation and goal

Being in the media can help create awareness and give visibility to people of lived experience to speak about things that impact them, to educate, get people on board and change people's minds.

It is always a good idea to think about your motivation for engaging with the media. This should include what your objectives are, what you are hoping to get out of it, how it will help and, most importantly, how it might impact you, your health, your privacy, your safety and that of those around you.

### What is your message?

Think about the main message you want to get across. Try breaking it down to one or two sentences. Test it on someone you can trust and ask for feedback. Getting the message wrong can have personal and community-wide consequences.

### Who is your audience?

Think about the people you are hoping to reach: is it peers, influencers and decision makers, the general public? Then decide what type of media they are most likely to read or watch. Do you want to feature in local stories or national stories?

## Preparing yourself

Do some research about different media outlets, channels and publications and their record on reporting on stories like yours. What kind of stories are they covering? Are they raising awareness and informing or are they using stories to push an agenda? Do they use headlines to grab the wrong attention or as click bait? Do they have examples of positive representation of trans issues and people? What is their reputation in the trans community, are they a trusted source of information?

It's also worth noting the key journalists, individuals or presenters that are covering other stories like yours, their approach and angle and their interest in them.

## Pitching your story

Until journalists know about you, you might need to work with an organisation that engages in media to let them know that you are interested in speaking if an opportunity comes up, or reach out to journalists directly.

When contacting journalists remember that many journalists prefer to be contacted by email. You should be able to find their contact or social media handles in articles or on the website of the media outlet. Here are some tips when contacting them:

- Be confident: Write a draft email and have someone check it for you to make sure it conveys what you want.
- Be clear: Get to the point quickly and include why your story is worth telling.
- Keep a record of calls or emails - who you have been in contact with, when, and the outcome.
- Try not to feel disappointed: you might not get responses or interest. Journalists can be very busy.

Being public results in many different levels of visibility - local level, regional, national, etc. You may not have control of your story once it gets out. Here are some tips to ensure you are achieving your goals:

- Re-evaluate your motivation regularly to make sure you are in control.
- Self-care is essential - take time to reflect on how your engagement is making you feel and take breaks.
- Think about the impact of speaking publicly on your health, family or friends.
- Be mindful of not causing more harm for the community through media engagement.
- Speak to your own experiences only and do not share other people's stories.
- Be mindful of the language you use and whether it is contributing to negative stereotypes.

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## Responding to a media request

### STEP 1

- Understand the purpose of the activity and the intended audience.
- Take some time to think about where the story might go.
- Find out what the angle of the story will be.
- Ask for the information to be provided in writing to keep as a record.
- Find out the format of the activity: is it a news segment? Is it a debate-type format where you will be discussing with others of different views? Is it a printed story? Is it a journalistic investigation?
- Ask who else will be invited to participate. This will give you a sense of whether the angle of the story or the activity is as it has been described to you. If they can't give you that information, wait until they can before making any decisions.
- Find out if the outlet has a good track record reporting on trans stories or issues.
- Assess the questions they are asking you and how are they asking them: do they sound like they understand the sensitivities around talking about trans issues?

### STEP 2

Once the media outlet and you agree to share your story, they will need to interview you. It is good to ask questions so you can work with the journalist to make your story the best it can be. Here are some things you will need to know:

- Will it be live or pre-recorded?
- Where will the interview take place and how long will it last? Don't do interviews in your home, school or place of work. Find a location that will not give away private information about you.
- What sorts of questions will be asked? You can ask for a list of questions.
- Who will be conducting the interview? You should research your interviewer!

You can change your mind at any point if you feel that the angle of the story or approach are not as they have been described to you. It is ok to change your mind.

You can also ask for advice and support from family, contacts or organisations that regularly engage with media and might have some advice for you.

### Tips for handling media opportunities

#### Ask questions

You should know as much as possible about the opportunity. Once your story is out on the record, you have no control over how widely it will be shared.

#### Be prepared

Speak only from your own experience. Find out what are key issues facing the trans community, check the latest laws, policies, statistics and facts, be careful with the language and terminology you use and resist the urge to speak for others.

#### Be safe

Being in the public eye is a vulnerable act. Your safety and the safety of those around you must always be your first priority. Trust your gut if something doesn't feel right and take precautions to limit the amount of private information shared in the story about you.

#### Take care of yourself

No matter how careful you are or what precautions you take, there will always be risks. This is the reality of sharing your personal story in a world with lots of bad-faith actors, ignorance and violence directed at trans people.

It is ok to turn down an opportunity if it doesn't feel right, appropriate or if you need a break.

#### Make a complaint

Reach out to the Australian Press Council if your story has been misrepresented and the media outlet is not taking appropriate measures to address your concerns.



Check our resource [Engaging in Public Advocacy](#) for extra tips on speaking out publicly.