

How to get publicity for your Carers Week event

How publicity helps your group

Local publicity of your event can help:

- attract new carers to your group
- raise awareness of carers in the community, the work they do and the challenges they face
- promote Carers Week, the annual national week aimed at celebrating and raising awareness of carers

Tips on dealing with reporters and photographers

Know who they are and how they work

Get to know your local media by reading newspapers, listening to radio and watching television. This will help you understand their style, the topics they are interested in and their audience. Take a note of the names of journalists who cover issues such as health/welfare/ social issues as they may be interested in your event. You should also find out how often your local newspaper comes out, or the times and days of radio programs that might cover your story.

Give them stories they can use

- Stories that have strong local content that will appeal to a local audience
- Appearances by local or national celebrities
- Quirky, unusual stories or events
- The human angle – i.e. a story on Carers Week featuring an interview of a carer
- A story which has powerful images

Organise photo opportunities

Local newspapers are always on the lookout for a good photo opportunity. If you are planning an event for Carers Week, spare some time to think about an interesting photo opportunity. For example, a photo of a local celebrity or dignitary participating in an event (especially if it is something out of the ordinary such as cooking a BBQ for carers for example).

Plan to secure media coverage of your event

One month before Carers Week

Contact your local media to tell them about Carers Week and the activities and events planned for your area.

Approach local newspapers

- Ask for the journalist who deals with health or social issues
- Introduce yourself and tell them about Carers Week and the activities and events planned for your area
- Ask whether this is something they would be interested in covering
- Ask them when is the best time to submit material in order to meet their deadline. Make sure you get their full contact details

Approach local radio stations

- Ask for the journalist or producer who deals with health or social issues
- Introduce yourself and tell them about Carers Week and the activities and events planned for your area
- Ask whether this is something they would be interested in covering
- Ask how you can submit material in order to meet their deadline. Make sure you get their full contact details
- If your local radio station has a talk-back segment, ask to speak to that show's producer to see if they would be interested in focusing on carers issues during Carers Week

Community service announcements

Local newspapers and radio stations could also promote Carers Week via a community service announcement (CSA). See page 3 for information on preparing a CSA.

Two to three weeks before Carers Week

Now is the time to send your media release to the journalist or producer you previously made contact with. Fax and email it, along with the *Fact sheet on carers* (also enclosed), then follow up to check they received it. Refer to page 4 for information on preparing your media release.

Radios and weekly or daily newspapers usually like to be notified about news items, photo opportunities and events at least a week in advance (this could be different for a fortnightly/monthly newspaper – check when they need items submitted by). These are placed in the news diary and then assigned to a particular reporter/photographer on the day.

The day before your event

Call your contact at the radio station or newspaper and ask if they will be covering the event or if they need any more information. If they are sending a photographer, make sure someone is available to meet them.

If they are not covering the event, ask if you can send them some information or good quality images after the event. For example, how many people attended? What did the event achieve? Make sure people in photographs have given their consent for their name and picture to be used. Include a caption to describe the image, i.e. names of people in the picture, and name of the activity or its location.

Other ways to publicise your Carers Week event

Write letters to the editor

You could write to the editor of a newspaper to alert the public about your upcoming event, or send a letter after the event to thank your group members and the public for their support.

Involve other organisations in your local community

There are many local community organisations which could help promote your event by including an article in their newsletter or displaying posters or leaflets, including:

- Libraries
- Local post office
- Local chemist
- Local supermarket
- Sports centres
- Local council noticeboards/newsletters/Town Halls
- Health centres
- Universities
- Newsletters or noticeboards belonging to religious organisations
- Local politicians' newsletters

How to write a community service announcement

CSAs are short messages that promote a charitable cause, activity or event that is considered of service to the community. Many television and radio stations set aside time in which they broadcast CSAs free of charge and a lot of newspapers, particularly suburbans and regionals, publish their version of CSAs in free community round-ups, "what's on" columns or even as "filler" ads.

Find out if the media outlet runs CSAs

Check with the media outlet whether they run CSAs and how they prefer them to be submitted. Some radio stations may need you to pre-record the announcement yourself before it can be aired, for others a typed script for a live read on-air will suffice. Others may prefer you to complete a form on their website.

Include all relevant information

- Who is organising the event and why
- The type of event
- When and where is it to be held (date and times)
- Contact details to register or for more information

Keep it short, sweet and clear

That means 50 words or less (sometimes 30 words or less) for a newspaper item. For radio stick to 5, 10, 20 or 30 second lengths.

5 seconds = 12-15 words

10 seconds = 25 words

20 seconds = 40 words

30 seconds = 60 words

Lay it out properly

Double space the wording of the CSA on letterhead and leave ample margins on either side of the page. If you don't have a letterhead, in the upper left corner, list the name and contact details of your group.

Title the CSA "Community Service Announcement" for radio. For newspapers attention it to the "community calendar" editor or "what's on" editor.

Provide a release date for the announcement.

If the item is to be "live copy" (read on-air), then type the entire CSA in all upper case, indicating the announcement is for on-air use.

Include a word count at the bottom left-hand side of the page, and for radio CSA's time in seconds i.e. 25 words = 10 seconds.

Submit it well in advance of your event

Generally speaking you should send in your announcement about three weeks before the event, but check the media outlet's requirements. For newspapers get your notice in early – it could then run in more than one edition of the paper.

How to write a media release

Preparation is vital when it comes to writing an effective, attractive and enticing media release. The closer you get to a media release that not only grabs the attention of those in the newsroom but needs little work to turn into a story – the better chance you'll have of seeing it run.

Your preparation should include:

- **Writing down all the major points relating to your story.** Include information to get the media interested in your story, as well as the information the public needs to know.
- **Placing your points in descending order from most to least important.** Do the first few points clearly explain the basics of your group's story (the who, what, where, when, why and how), and are they attractive to the media?
- **Finding an angle or a point of difference to make your story more attractive.** If your group is staging the same type of event as last year think about what is different about this year's event? Has it been revamped? Is it "bigger and better" than ever before?
- **Finding a human angle that makes the story warmer, or a "hook" that makes it more topical.** Both of these points will make your media release (and your story) more attractive to the media.

Writing your media release

Grab them early on – the headline

A good headline can attract the journalist's interest right away. Put your thinking cap on and come up with something creative and catchy.

Use a play on words, a pun or an attractive turn of phrase – just make sure the journalist reads on and doesn't instantly throw your release away. Half the battle is won if you grab attention with the headline and opening paragraph.

Keep it short and in the active voice: “Wagga Wagga carers cruise through Carers Week” grabs attention better than “Wagga Wagga carers group members will go on a river cruise to celebrate Carers Week”.

Telling the story – the body of the release

The first couple of paragraphs are the most important part of the release.

If the headline has got the media interested, then you need to win them over entirely in the first couple of paragraphs.

Here are ten tips to make sure your release keeps ‘em reading.

- **Explain the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY and HOW of your story, in the opening paragraph.** If you can’t do that you need to go back to the beginning and refine the message you are trying to tell.
- **Use the points of interest you prepared earlier in descending order from the most interesting down** as a basis for your release’s structure.
- **Try to write the release in the way that you would like to see it reported.** Make it easy for journalists to find the best parts of the release, and structure it so it reads similarly to how it would appear in the newspaper or newsreader’s introduction. If it gets cut down to two paragraphs, it means the most important information survives.
- **Use clear, simple and economical language.** Avoid jargon and phrases which may not mean anything to the reader.
- **Make your release active and upbeat by using quotes.** This helps make the release more human, adds clarity and sums up your release in a concise, lively manner. Include quotes from a carer, carer support group coordinator or CEO of Carers NSW.
- **Stick to the facts.** Don’t make outlandish claims that can’t be backed up and don’t oversell.
- **Highlight the benefits/achievements/positives.** Explain how people will benefit from going to your event.
- **Keep it short.** One page or page and a half at most. If the reporter needs more information they can contact you.
- **Remember the vital details.** Ensure the location, date, and time of your event is included and highlighted. Include contact details (mobile is best) for a spokesperson ready and willing to chat.
- **Check and re-check.** Proofread your release, read it aloud and then have a friend or colleague do the same. You may find typos or other errors while doing so, or it could help you edit your release and make it sound more interesting.
- **Send it with information about the Carers NSW fact sheet on carers** to your local media outlets. For example, you could include a sentence to say facts about NSW carers are available on the Carers NSW website (www.carersnsw.asn.au) under the ‘About carers’ link, in the ‘Facts about carers’ section.

Wagga Wagga carer support group
Station Road, Wagga 2027

2 October 2008

Wagga Wagga carers cruise through Carers Week

To celebrate Carers Week 2008 (*why*), on Tuesday 20 October (*when*) Wagga Wagga carer support group (*what*) is organising a lunch river (*where*) cruise (*how*) for their members and local carers (*who*).

Carer support group coordinator, Betsy Collins, said the lunch cruise was organised to say a big thank you to carers for their tireless work caring for members of the local community.

"Carers look after relatives or friends who have a disability, mental health problem, chronic condition or who are frail aged," said Mrs Collins.

"They work tirelessly round the clock to support the more vulnerable members of our community, and Carers Week is about celebrating their valuable contribution, while giving them an opportunity to take a break from caring and enjoy a leisurely lunch cruise," she said.

Robert Lynch, a carer from Wagga Wagga (*the carer doesn't have to give their name – they can change it or remain anonymous – or details of their caring situation*) said he was really looking forward to the cruise.

"I care for a family member 24 hours a day, so I'm looking forward to having a bit of a break and getting to spend some time with other carers," said Mr Lynch.

"Caring can be tough, but being a member of my local carer support group helps, as I get to make friends, share the ups and downs of caring, and generally get to have a laugh and a bit of a chat," he said.

You may choose to include just one or all of these quotes from the CEO of Carers NSW, but please do not change them without permission from Carers NSW.

Elena Katrakis, CEO of Carers NSW, the peak organisation for carers in the state, said Carers Week is about celebrating and recognising the valuable work carers do by looking after family members or friends.

Quote 1: "The NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care has once again funded Carers NSW in order to help carer support groups put on an event or activity for Carers Week.

Quote 1 continued: "There are an estimated 750,000 carers in NSW, and Carers Week is about celebrating and recognising their valuable contribution to the community, and encouraging hidden carers (those who are caring for someone but don't identify as a carer) to come forward and access services and support," said Ms Katrakis.

Quote 2: "Carers rarely have any special qualifications or training. They are ordinary people who have found themselves in a caring role for a range of different reasons. Fortunately, Carers NSW can offer help and support including counselling and emotional support, information, education and training. I would encourage any carer who needs information or support to call our free helpline on 1800 242 636," she said.

Quote 3: "We applaud Wagga Wagga Carers Support Group for their efforts in supporting and raising awareness of carers in their local area during Carers Week, and wish them every success with this event," said Ms Katrakis.

What: Wagga Wagga Carers Week cruise

Where: Murrumbidgee River

When: Tuesday 20 October, 12pm to 3pm

Who can take part: carers in Wagga Wagga

For more details: contact Betsy Collins on 0400 000 000

Photo opportunity available

Media contact: Betsy Collins on 0400 000 000