

# GREENPEACE

## GREENPEACE MANUAL: WORKING WITH THE PRESS For Activists With A Mission And A Message

### INTRODUCTION

This manual is designed to explain the basics of how to work with the media and what you can do to maximise the coverage your activities get, and more importantly, improve the quality of that coverage. After reading it we hope you will be more competent and confident in dealing with the media. Journalists and producers are not your friends and they are not your enemies, they are just the media. Often they need you as much as you need them.

### WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE?

On its most basic level the mass media is a means to deliver a message. How much the audience hears and how they respond to your message depends on how much 'interference' is going on at the same time. Start with a simple and clear message and work out the path of least resistance to your target audience.

Remember that we are constantly bombarded with so much information that the only way to ensure your message is heard is to plan truly effective communication. Don't just come up with a predetermined message. You should work out the response you want to achieve and tailor the message to that response. You need to strike a chord in the minds of the public so they remember your message above the rest.

How can you develop a theme and a message that strikes a responsive chord?

- 1. Clearly identify the response you want to elicit.**
- 2. Carefully consider your audience.**
- 3. Keep the theme understandable and the message clean and simple.**

### PICK YOUR AUDIENCE

One of the best ways to come up with a message that works is to figure out **who is your target audience**. Activists often fall into the trap of preaching to the converted, catering our message to an audience that already agrees with us.

Think about your lifestyle. You might work with an environmental or social justice group. Many of your friends may work for or with socially conscious organisations or groups. Generally these are not the people you need to do much talking to. They are already on your side and often are not the ones who have been directly impacted by the issues you work on.

Identifying your audience will often determine the most effective media outlets. A campaign aimed at publicising your website for use in schools is best targeted at journals school teachers read and education sections of newspapers, whereas alerting the general public to a nuclear waste shipment leaving Sydney secretly is a news story for TV, radio and newspapers.

## **KEEP IT SIMPLE**

Paul Keating was a skilful media manipulator because he understood that the Australian public had an incredibly short attention span and a distaste for complex issues.

He made things very digestible. Everything he spoke about was couched in simple words, with some corker quotes thrown in for good measure. Taxes were bad, employment was good and the Prime Minister of Malaysia was a recalcitrant bastard. Keating never let a real fact get in the way of a good image.

While all of this may not be admirable, we have much to learn from Keating's ability to tap into the sentiment of the masses and boil down complex issues to simple themes that a broad cross-section of the population could easily identify with.

Does this approach belittle our goals? No. Particularly with broadcasting, trying to reach as many people as possible is accomplished primarily through television.

There is a saying in media that the camera never blinks. That may be true, but it doesn't stay focused on one thing for long either. When an environmental story is carried on the nightly news there is generally no more than a 10-second interview. You may have only 10 seconds to get the message out that you hope will elicit a desired response.

If you really want that message to cut through all the interference and strike that responsive chord, it must be short, lucid and memorable. In that format, you must assume that you've got one shot - one sentence or less - to get your message across. When preparing to face the media, think of what you want the next day's newspaper headline to say about your issue or protest.

Brainstorm with your colleagues to develop a theme. Make the message short and clear enough to fit on a bumpersticker or placard. Consider some of the effective themes you've seen used in the past and think about how much can be said in so few words.

Once the theme of the issue or event has been refined, everyone involved should be briefed so they are well versed on how to best communicate the message. And remember, there's nothing wrong with repetition. Repeating your key message - and enforcing it with a visual image - are the keys to successful mass communication.

This is particularly important at a protest. The press will generally interview your spokespeople, but may also want to talk to one of the other participants. These people must be part of the media planning stage. They need to understand what you are trying to say and how best to say it in the type of 5-10 second soundbites that broadcasters are looking for. Train yourself to speak in soundbites.

Here are some typically asked questions you should anticipate at a protest. Be prepared to deflect them to answer the question you want to answer.

- **Why are you here?**
- **What do you hope to accomplish?**
- **Is this protest/event really a solution?**
- **What can people do?**

Before a protest, thoroughly brief everyone who might be in a position to speak to the media. If you have a home video camera, run through several mock interviews and video record them so everyone can see how to fine-tune their performance.

As with any interview, maintain eye contact, particularly on camera. Avoid using inside lingo or jargon. For instance, if you're working on the ESA reauthorisation, don't speak the acronym. Say 'Endangered Species Act'. A few to avoid: UNEP, OECD, IWC, WTO, etc.

Begin by:

1. **Goals** - Set your goals, identify your audience and the type of response you are trying to evoke.
2. **Theme** - Coming up with a theme for the issue that will elicit the desired response. Design the message with the theme and response in mind. What would you like to see as the headline for the next day's news story.
3. **Repetition** - There's nothing wrong with a little repetition of your key message. Remember there's nothing wrong with a little repetition of your key message. Remember, there's nothing ...you get the picture. Enforce it with visuals.
4. **Briefing** - Thoroughly brief everyone involved on the media strategy and rehearse responses to typically asked questions, ideally before a camera, but at least with each other.
5. **Counter arguments** - Figure out what type of information the opposition will be using to undermine your position and prepare the appropriate responses. The media will probably go to them to get a soundbite. If you know what they'll say, you can react to it, and get the last word in.

## **VISUALLY PACKAGING THE MESSAGE**

A single still photo can contain all the elements of the conflict and what you are trying to achieve. The successful images communicate without the need of captions or explanations. When planning special events or protests, begin by thinking of the image you want to project. Thinking visually will help you come up with that simple, easy to understand theme that is key to any good event.

Video and photos are the most powerful communications tools available; plan ahead for creative ways to communicate your message through different media. Finding a cameraperson should not be an afterthought, but a priority (if you have the budget, hire a professional - if you don't a participant with a Hi-8 camera is better than nothing). For a major event, schedule and budget ahead. Talk with others in the activism community to get recommendations for good photographers and television camerapersons. If the images turn out well, your investment will be worthwhile because you can distribute them long after the event is over.

Does your event really need a photographer or videographer on site?

1. Do you expect news reporters to be on the scene? If your protest/event is planned in a remote area or at an unusually early or late hour or on a weekend, the media may not be present, making your own camera operators that much more important.
2. Is this event of national or international news worthiness? If so, offering your footage to TV stations and your photos to the news wires is an option.
3. Are there additional uses for the photos or video for which you have planned and budgeted? It is easy to assume that your film will be useful after the fact, but burgeoning shelves of once-coveted tapes often prove differently.
4. Will having photo or video coverage on the scene provide more safety for the people doing the protest? If there is a chance that a confrontation might occur, a camera documenting events removes anonymity, making people less inclined to incriminate themselves on film.
5. Is it in your budget?

## **GLOBAL MEDIA STRUCTURE**

Obviously, the media varies widely depending on the country, the region, the political structure and the media itself. There are excellent guidebooks which include information on who the press are, where they are located and how to reach them as well as guides to such information on the international press desks abroad (i.e. Der Spiegel offices at the United Nations in Geneva or Reuters in Tokyo). Given the size and scope of the world's media it is important to target your media strategy to those that will a) be most interested and b) will have the most impact.

Much of the global media is set up in a similar fashion from country to country. In getting your message out nationally it is important to understand how the media is structured in your country so you can better strategize your media planning.

## **INTERNATIONAL MEDIA**

Worldwide, the media is broken down in a number of ways:

1. Type of Media-wires, newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, web-based etc.
2. International, national, regional or local.

3. Frequency of publication/airing - up to the minute, hourly, daily, weekly, monthly.
4. Focus-news, business, feature, entertainment, speciality audience, etc.

In each country you will have a bit of all of the above. Targeting your story by knowing what each media outlet is looking for in a story will help you receive better and more coverage. In addition, you will find a number of media outlets for each angle you would like to push (point 4 above). While your story may not reach the press across the board, it will reach the audience you want to reach more specifically (i.e. global warming and insurance industry to the business press, and threat of pesticides in food to the consumer affairs reporters).

Here is a breakdown of each media listed above and how they operate:

### **INTERNATIONAL WIRE SERVICES**

The wire services provide one of the best ways to ensure extensive coverage. Reuters, Australian Associated Press (AAP – known as Associated Press AP elsewhere), Agence France Presse (AFP) and Kyodo News, although set up differently, basically perform the same function -- sending print copy and photos to customers all over the world. The wires don't only send to newspapers. Television stations and networks use the wires to find out what news stories are breaking and to plan their assignment schedule.

A strong photo that moves on the wire can get picked up by dozens of newspapers and reach millions of people. When dealing with the press the wires are all too often overlooked, because in the outlying areas bureaux tend to be small or non-existent. That doesn't mean they won't cover an issue by phone or move a photo.

Small wire bureaux exist in smaller cities around the world, frequently staffed by only one or two reporters and rarely open on a 24-hour basis. In even smaller communities, the wires often rely on 'stringers' - semi-official correspondents who are paid per story, rather than by set salary. Contact the nearest bureau to find them. Each bureau contributes copy to local, regional, national, and world services provided by the wires to both their print and broadcast clients.

#### **A brief profile of the wires:**

- Associated Press (AP) and Reuters are the world's largest wire services with bureaux and stringers in almost every country.
- Reuters used to operate mainly as a business wire but has branched out to include all news. It is also one of the fastest wire photo services.
- AP services between 80 and 90 per cent of all US daily newspapers and hundreds of internationals as well. It's set up as a non-profit collective, unlike most of its competitors. AP's 'Daybook' is published for nearly every major city in the US and in some cities internationally. A daily schedule of news events, the Daybook is the primary tool used by print and broadcast editors in deciding which events to cover on any given day.
- Other international wires include AFP (the third largest wire after AP and Reuters --

best known for their photos), IPS (Latin American oriented), DPA (out of Germany), ANSA (Italy), EFE (Spanish), Kyodo and Jiji (Japan), TASS (Russia) and a number of others with a more national/regional focus.

- There are now a growing number of business wires such as Bloomberg News (American but used globally) set up to service not only the business press but businesses directly. Bloomberg is one of the fastest-growing media groups in the world and has successfully expanded into television and radio in recent years. The company offers an alternative computer screen system to media and businesses so they can access financial, news, diary, entertainment and sport information (in print, photos and video) updated constantly on screen.
- Syndicated news agencies (*The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Financial Times*, and many well-established national newspapers) write stories specifically for their newspaper but they syndicate them to subscribers like a wire service. A story written about Canada for the *Vancouver Sun* is often reprinted in papers in Sydney, Australia or in *El Pais* in Spain. This growing trend allows editors to shop from the best selection of wire and print stories they think their readers would like.

## THE DAYBOOKS

Some wires, for instance AP in the US, publish daybooks specifically for the media with a list of the day's events in their cities. Assignment editors read the daybooks to determine where to send their reporters. There is also a 'week in advance' daybook in some places, which gives editors more time to develop work schedules and reporting priorities.

Since not all of the media have daybooks, it's worth a call to ask if they do. If so, fax them a Media Advisory or Diary Note a few days before – which is a short description of your upcoming event (who, what, when, how, why only) and call back to make sure it's been received and displayed correctly.

## NEWSPAPERS

These can be international (*The Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*), national (*The Australian*, *The UK Times*, *Asahi Shimbun*, *Le Monde*, *Il Corriere Della Sera*, *El Pais*, *USA Today*), regional (*The Pacific Northwester*, *The European*), or city-based (*Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *New York Times*). Although they are hard news driven--the front page will always contain the big news of the day -- they also have many departments that should not be forgotten: lifestyle sections, business sections, local news sections, Sunday magazines and entertainment sections. Often they have a dedicated environment reporter that you should get to know (see the section on cultivating the press). Almost all have 'letters to the editor' and editorial sections to which you can contribute. Many newspapers also syndicate their articles and columns (see above) which have national or international distribution.

### Opinion pieces – Op-Eds

Often activists complain that even when they get media coverage, reporters miss the point and don't truly illustrate their position on a given issue. One of the best ways around this is to tell the

story yourself.

All newspapers feature an opinion page where readers submit pieces on issues of the day. The op-ed page (opposite the letters page) is one of the more widely read pages in a newspaper and a source of story ideas for assignment editors and reporters. Generally, opinion pieces are timely and topical, written by someone the paper considers to be a credible authority on that subject.

Opinion pieces or op-eds generally run between 500-800 words. They should express an opinion, but the best op-eds provide enough information to make the writer's opinion sound convincing to the uninformed reader. In establishment circles, an op-ed is a good way of creating credibility and can also serve as a valuable document for any campaign.

Op-eds are generally submitted to an opinion page editor or an editorial board for consideration and the turn around time can vary greatly. In writing an op-ed, first consider the audience you want to reach. Many papers are linked by syndicates so a piece accepted by a large daily might be put up on the syndicate and could end up running in newspapers all over the country.

All papers print their own opinion pieces daily. An alternative to submitting your own work is to request a meeting with the appropriate reporter or editor and brief them on the issue. By providing information and clearly conveying the logic behind your position, you may convince them to write their own opinion on the subject. Often opinion pieces written by the newspaper's staff appeal to broader audiences not usually predisposed to 'green' or 'liberal' messages.

Another feature of the opinion page is 'letters to the editor,' which are usually brief (max 250 words) responses to something run in the paper or a current event or debate. If you want to put your finger on the pulse of a community, read their letters to the paper.

## **MAGAZINES**

Often forgotten about until it is too late, magazines are an important information outlet for many people. In addition, magazine markets which were once very general in nature (Life, Geo, etc.) have changed dramatically to cater to special interests--women's magazines, sports magazine's, consumer magazines, nature magazines and magazines for cat lovers who are into astrology. You name it, there's a magazine for it.

There are two main things to consider when targeting magazine stories – time and images. The lead-time (time between a magazine's production and publication) is usually between three to six months – so the story/angle needs to remain current and not over-reported for a considerable time. Magazines look for high-quality images – full colour transparencies or 35mm slides.

Some ideas for magazine story ideas that have run in the past: coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef, and climate change – *Tracks* (surfing magazine), *The Big Issue*; women's cancer rates and toxics - the link (*Ms. Magazine*, several other women's magazines); violence against environmentalists (*Newsweek*); climate change and the insurance industry (*New Scientist*), etc. Street/music press often do great things with Greenpeace copy (*Drum Media*, *City Hub*, Sydney, *Bar Fly*, Cairns)

Don't forget the lefty magazines (*Green Left Weekly*, *Mother Jones*, USA) or the green/nature magazines (*Wellbeing*, *Nature & Health*, *Tomorrow Magazine*, Sweden, *National Geographic*,

USA). They're often a good place to start with an environmental news feature idea. Again, like newspapers and other outlets, magazines can be national or international and both are worth a try, particularly if you have good pictures to accompany your story (for example Greenpeace action women are a favourite of the women's mags because they can run shots of the women interviewed doing daring and dangerous actions).

## TELEVISION

There are several kinds of TV outlets: the international wire feeds (APTN, Reuters TV, etc.), international broadcasters which are linked via satellite to their markets around the world (CNN, SKY, BBC), national broadcasters (ABC, CBC, ZDF) and regional/local (Prime, WIN). Cable TV is also changing the market rapidly with some places around the world getting as many as 100 or more channels of TV at a time (yikes). This means, however, that there are a lot of program hours to fill and a lot of outlets for environmental stories that were not there before.

There are many ways to consider getting your issue/story to the television media. Video News Releases (VNRs, also referred to as video press releases, VPRs, or electronic press releases, EPRs,) are one of the more sophisticated in which you actually prepare video material and interviews that tell your story and allow producers to take the VNR and quickly produce their own news story (Basel Convention VNR, mutant fish VNR). Clip reel footage, gathering background footage on your story, is a bit less labour intensive but also allows producers to quickly do their own story without having to search for too much material (Japanese whaling in the Antarctic Dec 1999 - Jan 2000). TV producers prefer the latter and often have a policy of only running interviews done by their own staff.

You can also simply pitch your story to TV news producers or documentary producers which can be done with many of them if a story is newsbreaking (tuna companies go dolphin free), or one at a time if the issue is more of a news feature. As stated earlier, cable TV and many developing TV markets such as Eastern Europe and Latin America are often willing to take programmes that have already been produced and run them in their entirety. More established TV outlets are less likely to do so, but are usually eager to work with you to break a news story if they are the first to get a shot at it (CNN investigative unit).

Local television stations, if they are affiliates of the national networks or international TV wires, will receive much of their national and/or international footage/stories directly from these sources and will prepare the stories with their own reporters. Increasingly local stations are forming regional networks with stations in nearby media markets (a growing trend internationally in places like Asia).

There is a growing trend in high-rating pseudo-news shows (*A Current Affair*, *Today Tonight*) to also occasionally sandwich environmental stories between their priority features on visiting celebrities and consumer rip-offs. They will sometimes put investigative reporters on a story and are worth trying for certain kinds of stories but generally insist on the story being exclusive (see terms below).

## RADIO

Radio is also a good way to break stories locally, regionally, nationally or internationally (ABC News and Current Affairs, BBC World Service). Generally they will do phone interviews when they are not on the scene. Radio can also be the best at covering breaking news because it can be immediate. News stations tend to have frequent broadcasts and updates and like covering events as they happen. In addition, thousands of talk radio stations have proliferated around the world providing a growing opportunity for discussion and debate about environmental issues. Breakfast, Morning, Afternoon and Drive talk shows are all receptive to Greenpeace stories – they have two hours a day of issues discussion to fill. Radio is particularly important in the developing world where TV may be more difficult to reach and where radio has become the central point for news information. Africa, Asia and Latin America are all important radio regions.

## TRADE PRESS

If you are targeting a particular audience (e.g. – school teachers), special interest and trade magazines are a key avenue. There are more than 30 magazines and newsletters aimed at teachers in Australia, with a wide distribution network. An article with a photo in a trade magazine is much more effective for some issues than a brief mention in a daily newspaper. There are many other trade outlets such as: *Chlorine Today*, *Plastics News*, *Forest Worker News*, etc; local newsletters or weekly or alternative papers or magazines (*Gay And Lesbian Times*, *City Paper*, etc.). Most of these will be specific to your area/issue and may require your taking time to investigate who they are, how they operate, what they are interested in and making contact with the editor or reporter most likely to cover your story. They are listed in all comprehensive media guides by interest group.

## TALK SHOWS

TV or radio talk shows provide a venue for going into more detail on an issue than you would normally have a chance to. This might sound ideal, but there are pitfalls of which you must be aware.

Many talk shows, for example, have well-know host personalities that make their politics very clear. The audiences often share the host's politics and are predisposed to agree with him/her. Many talk shows hosts play 'devil's advocate' and make the guest look foolish to keep their audience interested.

Before you agree to go on the air, learn whatever you can about the host's style and the program's format. Is it live? Will there be an opposing guest? Will you be able to speak directly to the opposing guest? Is it a call-in show with listeners calling in to ask questions?

As with any interview, it is important to know the basics about your organisation, such as the number of supporters, numbers and locations of offices, annual budget, funding sources, and an explanation of 'What do you do?'

There is little margin of error when doing live talk shows. Make sure you know your material well. If it is radio, keep some written facts in front of you that you can access easily. Call-in shows can be typically unnerving because callers often pose questions that have absolutely nothing to do

with the topic you've been asked to speak about. They also may just want to call and insult you. Be cool headed, polite and prepared to deal with these kinds of callers.

## **CULTIVATING THE PRESS**

One of the best ways to favourably influence the quality of the coverage you receive is by educating the press on the issues before the event happens. Giving the press background information on an issue and letting them know that your group has a serious commitment to the issue will reinforce the perception that you are a credible group worthy of coverage.

Generally, an environmental reporter is a rare commodity. The environment is often covered by some type of general assignment reporter that has a particular interest in the beat. That person will probably not have the time to stay on top of all the environmental issues that his/her community might face. Chances are if there is an environmental story that isn't making the paper, they just haven't been tipped off to it yet, or had it explained convincingly that it is both timely and relevant.

Be aware that a typical reporter, editor or producer might get as many as 100 press releases in a day. As a result, many faxes, releases and phone messages get ignored. If an organisation or individual develops a reputation for contacting reporters on trivial or irrelevant topics, that person is quickly and routinely avoided in the future.

Be sensitive to media deadlines. Don't call a radio producer when their program is on the air, or a journalist just before their deadline. If you promise to send something or call by a certain time, do it. Professional media people will always appreciate it when you're sensitive to their deadlines.

As an activist working on specific issues, it's worth establishing a more personal working relationships with reporters in your area. Keep them well informed through mailings, phone calls or occasional meetings, and establish yourself as a reliable and credible information source.

Before calling a journalist, keep these tips in mind:

1. Know what you're going to say before you call and be succinct.
2. Consider the angles of your issue. How does it affect the community? Is there relevant legislation? What can people do? Who are the best spokespeople/ interview talent?
3. Avoid calling at deadline time or during airtime.

## **TALKING WITH THE PRESS**

We've all had it happen to us. A seemingly innocuous statement to the press becomes a glaring policy or factual error in print. We rant and rave that we have been misquoted or taken out of context. That may be the case, but usually there is little that can be done about it. The best remedy for this is avoiding the situation in the first place.

Try to put yourself in a reporter's shoes. They are on the other end of a phone line with the receiver cradled against their ear feverishly typing away as you passionately ramble on about the state of the world. Of course there will be mistakes.

Speak slowly. Make sure the reporter has time to get down what you're saying, or at least catch up if you're speaking too fast. Many reporters will read your quotes back to you if you ask; so ask.

Ascertaining the direction the interview will take will help you from being led into an area you don't want to talk about, or aren't qualified to. Ask in advance what information the reporter is looking for, or what type of questions you can expect. They will usually tell you. Remember that it is okay to say 'I don't know, but I can find out for you.' It is always preferable to plead ignorance than to shoot from the hip and be inaccurate.

Keep answers short and thoughts concise. We live in the era of the 'sound-bite' - know the one or two points you're trying to make in advance and stick to them as much as you can. Remember that only 5 -10 seconds of what you say will probably make it on the air, so be prepared with a pithy 5 -10 seconds worth.

Fax or give the reporter a press release on the issue you are talking about. This not only allows them to lift quotes exactly as you've written them if they chose to but also ensures they have a **PHONE NUMBER TO REACH YOU** should they have further questions or want to check the text with you.

### **SOME TERMS YOU SHOULD KNOW**

**EMBARGO** - A 'gentleman's agreement' within the media. If you give out information under embargo, it means that a news operation won't run a story until the day and time that you lift the embargo. The embargo date and time should be clearly explained in your conversations with reporters and in capital letters at the top of your press release. Giving sensitive information on an embargo is very sticky, as all news organisations seem to define embargoes differently. Embargoes are good for releasing reports and giving journalists a chance to review the information in advance of its release. But use them carefully. It's easy to make one journalist who sticks to an embargo very angry if another does not and breaks the story first. Also, with global time zones as they are, it's often difficult to plan a single embargo time if you are doing an international release.

**EXCLUSIVE** - Again the definition varies and you need to be explicit. Granting an exclusive can be a way of insuring coverage of an event in advance by allowing a single news outlet the opportunity to run the story first. Giving a TV station or newspaper an exclusive is also a good way to make enemies in competing media. However, sometimes the situation dictates a limited access to an event and you need to ensure that media will get out there. Offering a trusted reporter an exclusive is a good way to secure a commitment for his paper/station to cover the story.

**OFF THE RECORD** - If you want to give a reporter some information that you don't want attributed to you or associated with your name, you can go off the record and still convey that information. Technically you must preface your remarks by saying this is 'off the record'. Some reporters will refuse to hear remarks off the record because they don't want information they can't attribute. Because you go off the record doesn't mean the reporter can't get confirmation of the information from another source and go with it. Going off the record allows you to speak candidly with a reporter, but there are drawbacks. If you are continually jumping back and forth on and off

the record, the chance a reporter will get confused and use something you say increases. It can be a dangerous gambit.

## PROTESTS/EVENTS

Activists often carry out protests or actions as a platform for getting their message out. The media can be the conduit for those messages. If you get no coverage, that message goes nowhere.

There is no way to guarantee coverage, but there are many ways to improve your chances. You must think like assignment editors. Ask yourself why you should send one of your reporters to the scene and what you expect they will come up with.

When planning a protest, consider what special logistics should be taken into account in the planning stages--will there be daylight for cameras, will the media be able to see the event without risking arrest, if it's a press conference, do you have the proper sound system so that reporters can hear the speakers? Consider timing - you are not going to make the nightly news if you begin an action at 4 pm. Know the deadlines and constraints that the journalists are up against and do your best not to exacerbate them.

Learn the media markets. If a location is outside the media's coverage area, you will have an uphill battle selling them on the story.

## ON THE SCENE

The crucial part isn't just getting the press there but working with them on the scene. Far too often in the heat of a demonstration or event, activists forget to spend any time with them. Someone should be assigned to take responsibility for the press and serve as a liaison to the organisers. The press person should be in charge of distributing the press materials and ensuring that the press know who the campaigners are and that they speak to the organisers directly. In addition, always keep track of which media are at the scene so that you can contact them with additional information after the event.

## NUTS AND BOLTS CHECKLIST

1. **Theme and message.** Ideally that message should be catchy and brief enough to fit on a bumpersticker. Something simple and digestible.
2. **Background information - distributed to the press.** This information should include credible statistics that substantiate your criticisms. Make sure that all factual information is attributed.

3. **Images.** Determine IN ADVANCE if you need to arrange for a photographer or videographer.
4. **People to cover communication - on the phone and at the event.** It is vital that you have someone who can do interviews available on the phone at the office or at a pre-determined number during the event. A second knowledgeable person should be on the scene to talk with the press and ensure that the campaigners don't forget to speak to reporters. The person at the scene should learn (and write down) reporters names and phone numbers to facilitate follow-up calls.
5. **Call the wire services with updates.** They might not send a reporter to the scene, but will often file a story over the telephone.
6. **Call news and talk radio stations.** Radio stations like to update their news broadcasts or go live to the scene.
7. **Photographs.** If there are no photographers from the wire services or local papers on the scene, contact them about running your photos if you've taken them. If you can scan the pictures at a reasonably high resolution you can email them to media outlets (a flatbed scanner or slide scanner will both work to do this) Talk to the photographic editor to make sure you know what size file they will need. If you can't scan the pictures, someone will have to deliver them to the outlets that requested them. This is time consuming and can be expensive, so only hand deliver photographs if you have been given a clear indication that the outlet is keen on running them.

Colour photos should be run through a one-hour processing facility. Some, but not all, agencies can develop black and white film. Remember deadlines. It takes more than an hour to develop and dry negatives. Discuss this with the photographer and media people on the scene. Do the same with TV stations if you have your own cameraperson with footage and some of the stations don't show up.

## **THE PRESS RELEASE**

A press release is distributed to the media to provide the basic facts--the who, what, where, when, why and how. It should be concise and give the fundamental information that a journalist is looking for.

Above all, a press release should be brief and accurate. Always have at least two other people proof-read your release. Editors and reporters don't want to have to dig to find the most relevant information. It should read like a news story in inverted pyramid style, with the most important, obvious information at the top followed by quotes and background.

The basic format of a good press release includes: dateline with location and date, headline, all the 'Ws', and sometimes a quote or two, contact names and numbers all in one or two pages. One page is best. Write a strong lead paragraph, because usually that's as far as a City Desk editor will read.

Don't expect newspapers to run your release word for word (good journalists do their own research and writing) but many small local papers are under-resourced and will run a well-written

press release with few changes – another reason for the release to be absolutely accurate and for the quotes to be okay to run. As with all interactions with the press, you must try to anticipate what journalists are looking for. The better you do that, the more likely it will be that some of the press release content makes it into the story.

## **TYPES OF PRESS RELEASES**

There are basically three types of releases. (See samples at end of manual)

1. Protest/Event release
2. Reaction release
3. Study release

1. This is usually released before the event or timed under embargo to coincide with the event. It should get right to the point saying what you are doing and why in the first paragraph. Give a lot of specifics - the number of participants, location and other details. Include background information that substantiates your position and details your group's efforts prior to the demonstration (i.e. testimony, lobbying). Again, try to use independent information. Also offer solutions/aims for the protest (e.g. Our group is calling on company X to reduce the amount of waste it produces by adopting clean existing technology, etc).
2. The reaction release is a fine way to get into news stories on issues that you are following. If an event occurs that is related to one of your issues, you should be prepared to respond immediately. This release is generally very short and features relevant quotes. It must be released **AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE**, while the story is breaking, to have any effect at all. Generally, you don't need to provide any background but simply give the reaction that journalists will need to balance their story.

The idea is the same for reacting to government action, so you can usually have the press release ready in advance if you know the expected outcome.

By putting a release out immediately or even in advance of an event (Greenpeace said today's expected announcement from the Department of the Environment that...), you put information in a journalist's hand that you know they will need. If a reporter has your release, it's one less element she has to look for herself.

3. A study release is a straightforward document that you distribute with a report or study. It should summarise the most salient and newsworthy points of the report so that a reporter, if pressed for time, does not have to read the entire document, which is generally the case. An executive summary to your report is also extremely useful for reporters with very little time to read the entire report. Again, an embargo for the release of a report can also allow the media additional time to read a complicated report before it is released (see TERMS above).

## THE PRESS CONFERENCE

Press conferences are one of the most difficult, risky, but potentially useful media vehicles. They're also one of the most over-used media tools. Press conferences are most often held to release a significant report or to respond to a major development in your issue area. A simple checklist for arranging a press conference follows.

1. **Go ahead or not?** Is a press conference the best means of getting out your story?
2. **Content.** Know exactly what you wish to say and who the participants are before you commit to holding one.
3. **Time.** Start on time and don't let it run over 30-45 minutes. Always allow time for questions. Having someone act as 'stage manager' can help keep a press conference on target. If your conference comes off as ill prepared, reporters might perceive your opinions as ill prepared as well.
4. **Practice** presenting your remarks in advance and role-play to get prepared for questions. If you expect some hostile questions, you won't be flustered and your response will be that much more effective.
5. **Media convenience.** Be considerate of different media deadlines. Anything earlier than 9am or later than 2pm. will inconvenience reporters.
6. **Materials.** Make sure you have enough press kits or other materials available. Do not expect reporters on deadline to share.
7. **Planning.** Keep the number of participants to a minimum, and put strict time limits on the length of their prepared remarks. Make sure no two speakers' comments cover the same ground. Name cards or a printed list of speakers (in order of appearance) is essential.
8. **Preparation.** Use a lot of visuals (charts, diagrams, banners, video etc), otherwise the visual will be a lot of talking heads. Hang visuals with care or they will inevitably fall down at the most embarrassing moment. Consider offering video or photos of the issue you are addressing to entice reporters to cover the story.
9. **Contact details.** Have a sign-up sheet for attending press and request their name, affiliation and phone/fax numbers so you can stay in touch.
10. **Spies.** Be on guard for spies or industry representatives. If someone asks obnoxious questions, answer them politely and tactfully ask them to identify themselves.
11. **Sound system.** Depending on the location of your press conference, you may need a sound system. If a large turnout is anticipated, you should get a mult box (a system into which reporters can plug their microphones directly into the sound system).

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (CSAs)**

Community service announcements are a good way to publicise an event or issue and are more cost effective than advertising (they're usually free). Community radio stations in particular consider the air waves public domain, and encourage the airing of public service announcements about area events or organisations. Commercial stations often require up to a month's notice and the ABC will usually only run CSAs in regional stations. Generally CSAs are most effective outside the metropolitan areas.

Find out what style, length and format they require and tailor your approach. The two typical lengths are 30 and 60 seconds. You can submit your CSA in text format (which is most common) or do pre-recorded spots (more expensive but, with a celebrity to do your voiceover, a sure way to get airplay). If you're doing written CSAs, make sure you time them before they're submitted. If they're too long, they don't get used. The competition for CSA airtime is great, so be creative.

Be sure to include a 'kill date' or date for the station to stop running your PSA. Double-space the text, and include a contact name and phone number. And, as with anything that goes out to the media, have someone else proof-read it.

These are some media ideas to start with. There are many others and new technology is forcing us to consider such new venues as CD Roms, Internet and virtual reality. We must be constantly watching out for new ways to get our message out and to reach the public who will ultimately bring about the environmental change we are working for.

Good luck!

## Sample Press Release:



Greenpeace Australia, Ph (02) 9261 4666, Fax (02) 9261 4588 [www.greenpeace.org.au](http://www.greenpeace.org.au) ACN 002 643 852

# Political battle ahead over nuclear waste plans for South Australia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Tuesday 26 October 1999:** Research commissioned by Greenpeace reveals that 85 per cent of South Australians are opposed to their state accepting Australia's nuclear waste for disposal.

Greenpeace believes the results of a national survey by Insight Research are a warning to politicians from South Australia that they will face significant public opposition if they try to establish a national nuclear waste repository there.

"This finding does not come as a surprise to Greenpeace," said Jean McSorley, nuclear campaigner for Greenpeace. "Internationally, virtually every community faced with the prospect of 'hosting' a nuclear waste dump has said no. Opposition in South Australia will probably increase even further when people become aware of the full scope of the proposal for a national nuclear waste dump.

"Officials in Canberra argue the plan was agreed to in meetings between Commonwealth and State officials from across the country. However, that decision, made at a closed-door meeting, is obviously at odds with the views of the South Australian electorate."

The national nuclear waste repository will take waste from all over Australia. However, the largest amount of waste from any single organisation will come from the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation's (ANSTO) Lucas Heights site in Sydney.

The proposed new reactor for ANSTO is the driving force behind the Federal Government's push for a national nuclear waste repository. There is significant community opposition around Lucas Heights to nuclear waste being kept on site.

Of those surveyed nationally on the issue of the disposal of Australian nuclear waste, an average of 55 per cent opposed government plans to send all of Australia's nuclear waste to South Australia.

"Overall the majority of those living in other states also oppose this plan. This market research shows the people of South Australia aren't alone in their concerns," said McSorley.

Federal Science and Technology Minister, Nick Minchin and Environment Minister Robert Hill are from South Australia. Senator Nick Bolkus, Shadow Minister for the Environment and ALP Science spokesperson Martin Evans MP, are also from that state, as are Democrats Leader Meg Lees and Democrats Science spokesperson Natasha Stott Despoja. Greenpeace calls on these elected representatives to take action on these new public findings.

For further information: Greenpeace Media Officer Caroline Chisholm 0408 111 111  
For comment, Jean McSorley 0417 222 222

## Sample Press Advisory:

# GREENPEACE

Greenpeace Australia, Ph (02) 9261 4666, Fax (02) 9261 4588 [www.greenpeace.org.au](http://www.greenpeace.org.au) ACN 002 643 852

Attention: Chief of Staff

MEDIA ADVISORY

## Press Conference – Nuclear Issues

**Canberra Tuesday 26 October 1999:** Greenpeace will release independent market research at a **Press Conference** today.

This research comes at a time when a range of proposals has seen the nuclear industry climb further up the parliamentary and public agenda in Australia. Proposals for international and national waste dumps in Western Australia and South Australia, yet another nuclear reactor in Sydney, increased shipments of nuclear waste and plutonium fuel sailing through our waters: all this on top of an expansion in uranium mining.

It is time to evaluate Australia's national nuclear involvement and canvas options for the future, and to listen to what Australians want, rather than just what the nuclear industry wants.

### PRESS CONFERENCE

**Date:** Tuesday 26 October 1999  
**Time:** 12 noon  
**Location:** National Press Club  
16 National Circuit  
Barton  
Canberra, ACT

For more information contact:

Greenpeace Media Officer Caroline Chisholm: 0408 111 111

For comment, Jean McSorley: 0417 222 222

## Sample Post-Protest Release:

# GREENPEACE

Greenpeace Australia, Ph (02) 9261 4666, Fax (02) 9261 4588 [www.greenpeace.org.au](http://www.greenpeace.org.au) ACN 002 643 852

## Greenpeace activists arrested trying to stop biggest nuclear shipment ever to leave Australia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Sydney, Friday 26 November, 1999:** Fourteen Greenpeace activists were arrested last night trying to stop the biggest shipment of spent nuclear fuel rods ever to leave Australia. Police divers arrested four activists at Port Botany after they entered the water in front of the *Bouguenais*, the ship that is taking the dangerous transport to France for reprocessing.

Earlier in the evening, Greenpeace and community protestors delayed the secret transportation of the fuel rods through suburban Sydney by holding a candlelight vigil in front of the gates to the Lucas Heights Nuclear Reactor.

"It is a disgrace that the Federal Government continues to keep the public in the dark about this extremely dangerous nuclear shipment," said Greenpeace campaigns manager Benedict Southworth.

"Greenpeace believes nuclear waste should not be transported and it must be kept on site until a safe way of dealing with the waste has been found.

"These shipments place an unacceptable threat to the people of Sydney and the environment. The Federal Government must put a stop to the production of these wastes and stop pretending that these shipments are a solution to Australia's nuclear waste problem."

Greenpeace also called on the NSW Government to insist that the veil of secrecy over these shipments be lifted.

"The State Government has a responsibility to add its voice to the calls for greater transparency," said Southworth. "It can not sit back while ANSTO exposes Sydney residents to secret shipments of highly hazardous nuclear material."

The 308 spent nuclear fuel rods are being shipped on the *Bouguenais* to Cogema's reprocessing facility in La Hague, one of the most polluting industrial facilities on the planet. La Hague is the single biggest emitter of artificial radioactivity on earth. It discharges 2 million litres of radioactive water EVERY DAY into the English Channel.

**For more information contact:**

**Benedict Southworth on 0413 333 333 or Rupert Posner on 0419 444 444.**

**Jean-Luc Thierry (Greenpeace France) 00 11 33 1 5333 8577.**

**Stills and video footage available.**

## Sample Reaction Release:

# GREENPEACE

Greenpeace Australia, Ph (02) 9261 4666, Fax (02) 92614588 [www.greenpeace.org.au](http://www.greenpeace.org.au) ACN 002 643852

## US Senate set to scuttle Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

EMBARGOED UNTIL MONDAY 11 OCTOBER 1999

**Monday 11 October 1999:** Greenpeace today called on the Australian Government to use all possible means to pressure the United States Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) on nuclear weapons testing.

The call came as a small number of Republican Senators, led by Jesse Helms, threatened to vote against the Treaty when it is presented to the American Senate tomorrow (Tuesday 12 October).

The international Treaty, agreed to in 1996, came after massive international protests against the 1995 nuclear weapons testing by France and China. Since 1945, more than 2,050 nuclear tests have been conducted, an average of one every 10 days.

“This must be one of the most disheartening developments on the international scene for decades,” said Jean McSorley, nuclear campaigner for Greenpeace International. “At the end of the second millennium the world should be able to look forward to a complete ban on nuclear testing and to nuclear disarmament. Sadly it seems all the efforts by the Australian public and politicians, all the protests made around the world for so many years, could now be undone by a few narrow-minded politicians in the US.

“If the Treaty is not ratified now, it could be delayed for years. If the world’s largest nuclear weapons state does not ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the consequences could be dire,” McSorley said. “The message this would send to other nuclear powers is that it is okay to keep testing, when clearly in environmental and human terms it is not.”

Recent opinion polls show that 82 per cent of voters in the US support ratification of the Treaty. However the Senate has been lobbied by nuclear ‘hawks’ in the government and defence department who are resisting any further cutbacks in nuclear arms and restrictions on nuclear weapons. The US is still undertaking sub-critical nuclear tests.

Australia has long supported the CTBT. It would undo many years of hard work if the Treaty was not supported by the US. Greenpeace has called on Australian Foreign Minister Mr Downer to make official representation to the US Senate to ratify the CTBT.

For further information contact:

Greenpeace Nuclear Campaigner Jean McSorley on 0417 111 111 or Greenpeace media officer Caroline Chisholm on 0408 222 222.

## Sample Report Launch Release:

# GREENPEACE

Greenpeace Australia, Ph (02) 9261 4666, Fax (02) 92614588 [www.greenpeace.org.au](http://www.greenpeace.org.au) ACN 002 643852

### CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECTED TO KILL GREAT BARRIER REEF IN 30 YEARS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Brisbane, Tuesday July 6, 1999:** The vast majority of the Great Barrier Reef will be dead in around 30 years unless projected levels of climate change are stopped, a ground-breaking scientific report launched internationally today by Greenpeace has found.

In less than a lifetime, all coral reefs around the world are expected to be devastated by coral bleaching, a potentially fatal condition which causes corals to lose their colour and turn white.

The report "Climate Change, Coral Bleaching and the Future of the World's Coral Reefs" found that if global temperatures increase as projected by Australia's CSIRO and Germany's Max Plank Institute, coral bleaching would increase in frequency and intensity all over the world until it occurs annually by 2030 to 2070. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that advises world leaders on climate change science uses these two climate projection models.

"Coral reefs could be eliminated from most areas of the world by 2100," said the report's author Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, a marine biologist with the University of Sydney who has studied coral bleaching for 15 years.

"Our current understanding of coral bleaching suggests that corals are not keeping up with the current rate of warming and that they may be the single largest casualty of climate change. While they will not become extinct, their health and distribution may be severely compromised for at least 500 years unless climate change is stopped."

The key findings of this study include:

- Increased sea temperature is the main reason why mass coral bleaching has occurred with increasing intensity and frequency over the past two decades.
- Globally, coral bleaching events are projected to occur with increasing severity and regularity, until they occur every year. This is expected to begin some time between 2030 to 2070 and would be ongoing.
- This heightened level of bleaching is expected to severely degrade reefs by around 2050.
- The destruction of these fragile ecosystems would cost billions of dollars in lost revenue from tourism and fishing industries, and damage coastal regions that are currently protected by coral reefs.

"As global temperatures increase due to increases in greenhouse gases, more and more corals will die from coral bleaching," said Erwin Jackson, Greenpeace Australia's Project Coordinator. "We must begin to phase out the causes of global warming, the burning of oil, coal and gas, in order to ensure the long-term survival of the Great Barrier Reef."

**For more information or to arrange interviews, contact Louise Fraser on 0413 444 555, or Erwin Jackson on 0411 666 777. In Sydney contact Rupert Posner on 02 9263 0333 or on 0411 123 567.**

**Sample CSA:**

# **GREENPEACE**

Greenpeace Australia, Ph (02) 9261 4666, Fax (02) 9261 4588 [www.greenpeace.org.au](http://www.greenpeace.org.au) ACN 002 643 852

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

### **VISIT THE GREENPEACE YACHT TIAMA**

The Greenpeace yacht *Tiama* docks at Airlie Beach's Abel Point Marina on Tuesday September 21 for a week and arrives in Mackay on Tuesday September 28.

Visit this specially designed research and campaign vessel on **OPEN DAYS** from 10am to 4pm:

<b>AIRLIE BEACH -</b>	<b>Wednesday 22 &amp; Saturday 25 September</b>
<b>MACKAY -</b>	<b>Wednesday 29 September</b>

Come and meet Greenpeace, ask questions, view a public information display on how climate change will affect the Great Barrier Reef, see solar-powered computer technology at work, and visit the cyberactivist tent.

Everyone is invited to the **public forums on Climate Change and the Great Barrier Reef:**

**AIRLIE BEACH - Thursday 23 September, 7.00 to 9.00pm**

Whitsunday Wanderers Resort, Shute Harbour Rd

**MACKAY - Thursday 30 September, 7.00 to 9.00pm**

Coral Sands Motel, 44 Macalister St.

**For more information contact Louise Fraser on 0413 444 555.**

**Sample Advisory:**

# **GREENPEACE**

Greenpeace Australia, Ph (02) 9261 4666, Fax (02) 9261 4588 [www.greenpeace.org.au](http://www.greenpeace.org.au) ACN 002 643 852

## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **PUBLIC FORUM – 'ENVIRONMENT, SOCIETY AND THE ECONOMY'**

Greenpeace and Suncor will host a public forum to discuss the environmental, social and economic impacts of developing a Shale Oil industry, on Thursday October 14, in Gladstone. The public is invited to participate in the discussion, which will be facilitated by Liz Cunningham, Member for Gladstone.

Speakers include:

Robbie Kelman	Greenpeace climate campaigner,
Gord Lambert	Suncorp corporate director environment, health and safety,
Liam Tobin	Central Queensland University, Faculty of Engineering
Prof Ken Piddington	[former director] World Bank environment division.

**When:** **Thursday October 14, 1999.**  
**5.45pm for 6pm start.**  
**6pm – 7pm presentations**  
**7pm – 8pm open forum (questions from floor)**

**Where:** **Engineering Lecture Theatre,**  
**Gladstone campus,**  
**Central Queensland University.**