

A guide on how to get media for your Close the Gap event

Public support is crucial if we are to Close the Gap – and the media is an essential tool in spreading this message to audiences beyond those who attend Close the Gap Day events.

Many people find the prospect of contacting the media daunting, but this step-by-step guide can help you. As a member of the public and your community, the media will not be expecting you to be an expert on how to close the gap in Indigenous life expectancy. Rather, the sorts of things they will be interested in are the fact that you are concerned about the Indigenous health crisis, how you feel about it and the actions you are taking.

Preparing a media release

The first step is to prepare a media release that summarises the key points about your event, and explains National Close the Gap Day.

Below is a template that you can adapt:

[Today's date]

MEDIA RELEASE

***Name of Organisation* joins efforts to Close the Gap**

[Name of organisation] of *[name of suburb/town]* will join hundreds of other organisations in calling for an end to the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians, with an event on *[date]*.

Attendees at the event will be among tens of thousands of Australians taking part in activities on and around Thursday 16 March to mark the annual National Close the Gap Day for 2017.

Now in its second decade, the Close the Gap campaign is Australia's largest campaign to close the gap on life expectancy and urges governments to take action to achieve health equality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2030.

[Name of spokesperson], *[title of spokesperson]* from *[name of organisation]*, said the *[Name of town/suburb]* event would draw attention to how local actions could drive lasting change.

"The aim of this *[type of event]* is to bring the community of *[name of town/suburb]* together to tell the Government we want the Indigenous life expectancy gap closed once and for all," *[he/she]* said.

"Those in power must make sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are at the core of decision-making about their own health needs, and recognise that those within these communities have the solutions.

“Our leaders still need to step up to do more nationally to help, and we can still achieve a lot locally, especially by keeping the pressure on politicians to make real, lasting change.”

[Name of spokesperson] said [Name of town/suburb] guests would join others at more than [number of events] events in signing the official Close the Gap pledge, urging action from all Australian governments.

“Come join us, and thousands of others across Australia, in our efforts to Close the Gap,” *[he/she]* said.

[Key speaker] will be speaking at the event, and *[key performer]* will be performing. Eg. All *[attendees e.g. students, team]* will be wearing black and white to show their support.

[This sentence can be adapted depending on the nature of your event. Insert here any other information about your event.]

The Close the Gap Day event will be held at *[venue]* and start at *[time]*.

About Close the Gap:

Close the Gap is Australia's largest ever campaign to improve Indigenous health. Supported by more than 40 Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations, the campaign calls on Federal, State and Territory governments to commit to closing the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation.

For more information about the event, please contact *[name of contact person]* on *[mobile telephone number]*.

-Ends-

When inserting information into this template, make sure you include and consider the following:

- **Key information:** The few paragraphs should include the ‘who, what, when, where and why’ of your event.
- **Quotes:** Include a quote from a spokesperson, such as the head of your organisation or the main organiser of your event.
- **Make it different:** As well as providing key information, your media release should show the journalist why your event is unique and newsworthy.
- **Short, simple and clear:** Media releases should use clear language, never be more than one page, and generally there should be one sentence per paragraph, two at most. Always check for spelling mistakes!

Selecting media

Now that you have prepared a media release, think about the media publications and journalists who will be interested in your event. Some things to consider are:

- **Do you have existing resources?** Be sure to have news items in your own organisation's newsletters, website, intranet, and other channels of communication.
- **Where is your event taking place?** Community events are of most interest to local media, so make note of the publications that are distributed in the area where your event is taking place. Find out about their deadlines and publication dates so you will know when to contact them.
- **What type of event is it?** Journalists have briefs to cover particular areas, so do some research and find the names of journalists who cover Indigenous and/or health issues news or community events.
- Try to incorporate a creative action and strong visual component to your event to maximise the interest of newspaper photographers and regional television.
- The most likely places to send your media release will be – the local newspaper, local radio station, community radio station, and local regional TV station.

Contacting media

Now that you have put together a list of media publications and some particular journalists, you are ready to contact local media. NOTE: Please do not contact metro media (eg. *The Australian, The Age, Herald Sun, Sydney Morning Herald, Daily-Telegraph, The Courier-Mail, The West Australian, The Hobart Mercury, Adelaide Advertiser, Canberra Times* etc) as Oxfam's Media Unit will be responsible for contacting them. If you do have an event that you think would interest one of those publications, please contact Oxfam's media unit, who can work with you in contacting them.

Find the contact telephone number for the publication's newsdesk on their website or on whitepages.com.au.

Call the newsdesk. If you know the name of a particular journalist who you would like to speak to, ask to speak to them.

Introduce yourself, and outline the key points that make your event interesting. For example:

"Hi, it's Jane Dempsey from Applegate Primary School. It's National Close the Gap Day on 16th March, which gives people throughout Australia a chance to show their support for closing the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and other Australians.

"Our school is holding a special event, where 200 students will create a giant colourful mural in the school grounds. They will also sign a pledge to urge the Government to stick to its commitment to close the life expectancy gap by 2030.

"We'll also be cooking up some bush tucker as part of our event. I thought this might be of interest to you as it will be quite colourful and might make a good photo."

Speaking to media

When speaking to a journalist or editor, you should have at hand:

- A copy of the media release. You should offer to send this to them by email. If emailed, it's often best to copy the text into the body of an email, rather than as an attachment.
- Contact details of someone they can interview, who will be able to speak about the event and National Close the Gap Day. This can either be you, the main organiser of the event, or the head of the organisation taking part.
- Name and mobile telephone number for someone who the journalist or photographer can contact, should they wish to attend the event.

At the event

Assign someone at your event to look after any journalist or photographers who may attend.

Journalists and photographers have minimal time, so someone should help the journalist set up interviews and take photographs in a short space of time. This may mean being flexible with your event's running order to accommodate their needs.

You should also assign another person to take photographs of the event, record any speeches that take place, and get quotes from some of the attendees.

Before or after the event

Journalists may not be able to attend the event, but could still be interested in information about it.

Select the best one or two images from the event, or images provided to you beforehand, and put together some quotes from the speeches and participants. Contact any journalists who express interest, and send these additional materials to them.

Checklist

Have you:

- ✓ Written a short, concise media release that provides an overview of your event and the significance of National Close the Gap Day?
- ✓ Developed a list of publications and contacts that would be interested?
- ✓ Called each of them and sent them the media release?
- ✓ Appointed a spokesperson who can undertake interviews about the event?
- ✓ Appointed a contact person for any journalists or photographers who attend the event?
- ✓ Appointed someone to take photographs of the event, and obtain quotes from participants?
- ✓ Sent these to any journalists who were interested in the event, but were unable to attend?

Other ways to be heard:

If you have something to say about the Indigenous health crisis, you may like to consider writing a Letter to The Editor, usually 90 words or less.

You could write a letter to your local paper prior to NCTGD urging people to hold an event or write a letter after the event saying how good the event was and what you think you got out of participating.

You can also call in to talkback radio shows to make your point about the importance of Close the Gap. Have your 'key messages' ready – the issues you want to raise. Have one main point to make and say it clearly and succinctly.

