

Simple tips for better media interviews

You're in control

Put yourself in control of the situation – don't let the journalist dictate terms.

Step 1: Buy time! Gather information from the journalist before deciding whether to do the interview:

- What do they want to know? Who else are they talking to?
- How are they approaching the story? What angle does the journalist want to cover?
- What is their deadline?
- For broadcast, is it live-to-air or a pre-recorded interview? Where else will this interview be aired?
- Why do I want to do this interview?
- Do I have a clear, accurate and positive message? Will it help achieve my communications objectives?
- Will the interview reach my target audiences?
- Am I prepared?

Step 2: Only then are you able to determine whether or not to do the interview. You are in control of interview location, time, and what observers might be present. A feeling of control will also help you control your emotions during the interview.

Bridging phrases

Bridging phrases give you thinking time and a quick pathway back to your key message:

- *“The most important point is this...” or “another thing to remember is...”*
- *“What it all boils down to is...” or “what’s important to remember, however, is...”*
- *“Let me put that in perspective...” or “the big picture is...” or “when seen in the context of...”*
- *“Let me just add...” or “that’s not my area of expertise, but what I can tell you is...”*
- *“What your listeners/readers should be aware of is ...”*

Language

- Use positive language
- Be as precise and clear as you can, if you don't think the reporter 'gets it' try saying it another way (analogies are useful), avoid jargon

- Killer facts and big statistics can make your message stand out
- It's ok to reference the credibility of another party (eg govt or scientific report) to justify your position
- Is there a colourful analogy to help make your point
- Body language and attitude matter – they are obvious on screen and on air and set the tone for how the journalist will interact with you. Stand tall, breathe deep, smile and project calm confidence.
- Don't take offence to questions or the interviewer's attitude - it's not personal, it's just a debate
- Know when and how to deflect a question to someone else

Final check

- I know why I am doing this interview
- I know who the audience is and where the interview will be published/screened
- I have developed 3 clear, succinct, positive key messages
- I will use bridging phrases to get back to my key messages
- I have anticipated difficult questions
- I am comfortable with the time and location of the interview
- I will mention the 3 key messages by the time the interview is concluded