

9

COMMUNICATION



# community resource kit



For full details and contents of the kit please read the introduction at [www.community.net.nz/how-toguides/crk](http://www.community.net.nz/how-toguides/crk).

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Family and Community Services  
Ministry of Social Development  
PO Box 1556  
Wellington  
New Zealand

Local Government and Community Branch  
The Department of Internal Affairs  
PO Box 805  
Wellington  
New Zealand

Phone 04 916 3300

Phone 0800 824 824

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As well as printed copies, the Community Resource Kit will be available on CD and online at [www.community.net.nz](http://www.community.net.nz). Any future updates to the kit and details of where to obtain further copies of it will also be posted on this website.

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# introduction



## what's in this section?

Communication is a very broad term that encompasses a lot. In this section we will deal with the type of communication that gives community organisations a voice on behalf of their group and their members. After all, community groups not only exist to provide a service or product, but also exist to give a voice to community concerns.

Such communication activities are undertaken by community groups for a number of reasons, including:

- to influence some kind of change
- to inform people about what they're doing
- to advertise services, products or events
- to attract new members, supporters and donations.

In this section we will look at various aspects of this communication, including:

- communications planning
- communicating via the media
- communicating with (central and local) government.

## communication tools

There are a large number of ways to communicate both within an organisation and to external audiences, including:

- written material e.g. annual reports, fact sheets, articles, newsletters, brochures, pamphlets, posters, publicity, media releases, petitions, organisational policies, minutes of meetings etc. Key documents can be provided for staff and visitors in accessible places e.g. reception areas
- technology-based material e.g. intranet, internet, email, conference calls, E-news
- radio and TV (via the media)

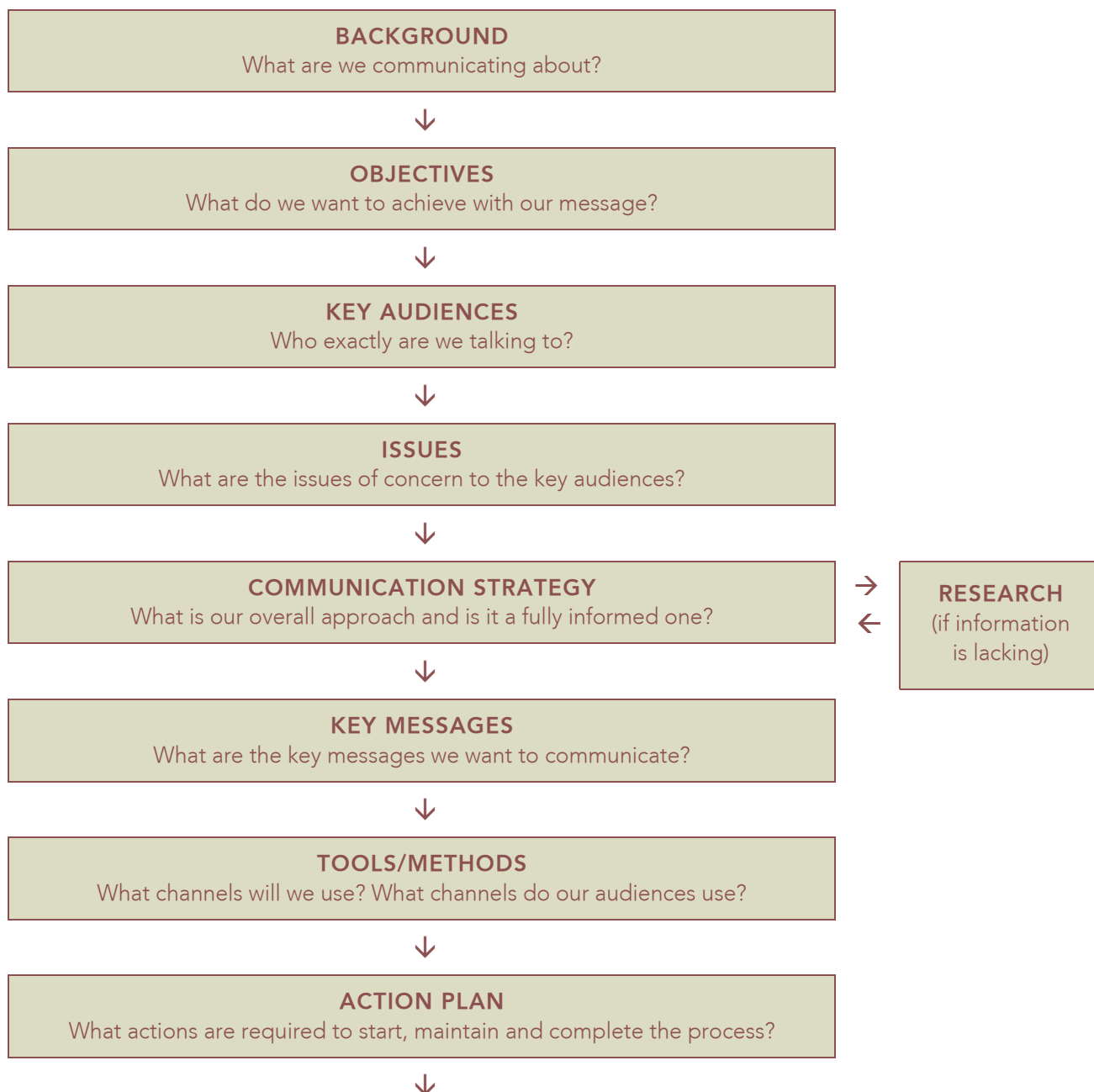
- phone calls
- direct public influence e.g. protests, public meetings, staff meetings, promotion events, speeches/public appearances
- advocacy (including lobbying and forming coalitions)
- submissions (written and verbal)
- networking (informal and formal).

Illustrations of how some of these tools can be used are given later on in this section or elsewhere in this kit (see *Section 10 – Meetings* and *Section 12 – Information Technology*).

# communications planning

## communication planning process

Rather than having an "I want to do something now" attitude, it's important to plan your communications for them to be successful (see diagram below).



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#### NOTES:

##### 1. Finalise communications plan

- Get agreement and sign-off from all participants and organisational authorities. Be clear and in agreement so that there are no surprises or problems internally when the communication begins.
- Prepare for impact – what will the communication result in? Do increased calls and product demands need extra staff? Think this through.

##### 2. Implement plan

- Check all stages are on track. Ensure sign-off and delegated authorities are clear about their role and monitor if required.

##### 3. Review progress

- What will be your review processes? How often?
- Refine the strategy, vehicles or message if review suggests you should. Should you increase activity? Decrease? Promote outcomes?

(Adapted from *Toolkit for Managers*, Public Health WWW Networking Project).

## communications plan

The end result of the full communications planning process is a communications plan which documents the process for effectively communicating with all stakeholders (see following template).

### COMMUNICATIONS PLAN TEMPLATE

#### Executive summary

*Write this last. Provide an overview of the plan. State the problem or opportunity and explain how communications can help. State the objectives and expected outcomes, and cite any research used in forming the plan.*

#### Purpose/goal

*State briefly why you are communicating and what you hope to achieve e.g. market, inform, manage expectations, change behaviour etc. This should be no more than two sentences.*

#### Background

*Set the context. How did we get here and why have a communications plan? How does the project/communications fit with the business objectives, purpose, vision and values? Describe the project and provide background.*

#### Situation analysis

*What are the business issues, problems and/or opportunities? What are the communications initiatives that could help? Consider the issues that might affect the way you communicate. These may be political, environmental, socio-economic, legal, operational, etc. Include any research, previous history or lessons learned from previous projects.*

#### Objectives and measures

*What are your communication objectives and how will you measure them? The objectives should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely). You need to have something to benchmark your measurements against so the objectives can be evaluated at the end. This may involve surveys (informal or formal/email, phone or written), observation (do people look at the notice board?), team meetings, face-to-face enquiries, unsolicited feedback to managers, team leaders etc. Note: Your communications objectives are not to be confused with the project objectives – they are in addition.*

#### COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

E.g. To increase awareness of your services among new migrant communities by 20%

#### MEASURES

20% more new migrants surveyed after the project were aware of what you provide, compared to those surveyed prior to the project commencing

#### Stakeholders

*Identify your key stakeholders. These are people or organisations that have an interest in the outcome of the project.*

#### PERSON OR ORGANISATION

#### THEIR INTEREST

#### OUR INTEREST

#### Target audiences

*Who are the target audiences you wish to communicate with? Segment your audiences by internal and external. Remember to be specific e.g. internal audience may be your staff, but specific staff may need specific messages communicated to them. You may have some secondary audiences as well such as the general public.*

#### Risks/issues and mitigation

*Identify any communication risks or issues that might affect your project and outline how you will mitigate them. When identifying risks, be sure to make the distinction between what is a risk, and what is a consequence of a risk. Use the matrix below to determine the level of risk. Ensure the mitigation strategies are picked up in the Action Plan and responsibilities assigned.*

RISK	MITIGATION	RISK WITHOUT MITIGATION	RISK WITH MITIGATION
E.g. The organisation will be criticised for lack of consultation	Consult as widely as possible, keep key stakeholders informed	Med High 8	Med Low 2

Use the following diagram to determine communication risks.

Impact (if risk happens)	high	6	8	9
	medium	3	5	7
	low	1	2	4
		low	medium	high
<b>Likelihood (of risk occurring)</b>				

**Key messages**

What are the messages you wish to communicate? Ideally there should be one overarching key message or phrase people can remember and repeat, or at least no more than 3- 5 key messages (i.e. the most important things you want people to know). Then develop a series of secondary messages, which may be used for different audiences or situations. These secondary messages could be in the form of Q & As. Note: Messages are not "explanations". Keep these brief.

**Tools and tactics**

What communication tool/approach or combination of tools will be most effective? Most communication strategies use several tools. For example a broadcast email will provide a different result from an email direct from the Chief Executive, which will differ again from using staff meetings. A media release is a cost efficient way of getting information to the general public but with no guarantees of publication whereas a paid advertisement is guaranteed to run. Other tools to consider include newsletters, fliers, posters, brochures, face-to-face meetings, the website etc.

**Timing**

When is the best time to run the communications – what else is happening at that time? (e.g. Is it election year? How will that impact? Is it school holidays with people away? etc). Also include key project milestones or events that will spark the need to communicate to your stakeholders or audiences.

**Budget and resources**

These need to be factored in from the start. Good communication costs money and you may need to pay for some external communications expertise to help implement your plan. These costs will need to be budgeted. Remember that design, printing, advertising and distribution are all separate costs.

**Action plan**

Outline what needs to be done, who will do it and when. You must make sure all those with responsibilities agree to them. This plan will need to be regularly monitored and may need updating during implementation. Identify whether it is the project manager or project sponsor who has final sign-off on materials.

DATE/ TIMING	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY
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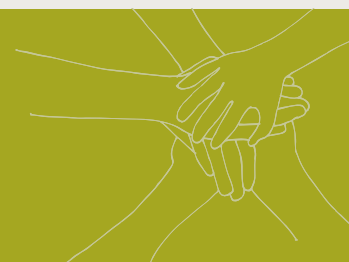


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**Monitor effectiveness**

It is important to monitor the effectiveness of your communications plan as the project is implemented, as you may need to reassess your tactics. At the end of the project, hold a debrief and determine whether your objectives were met and work out what you would do differently next time.

# communicating via the media



The media (from newspaper, radio or TV) is probably the most effective channel for voluntary and community organisations to communicate a message to the outside world.

The media can be used, for example, to:

- publicise forthcoming events
- make announcements e.g. a new key appointment
- support local or national awareness weeks/days e.g. international volunteers day
- comment on issues
- publicise a new service.

Some advantages of using the media include:

- the ability to reach a very wide range of people (i.e. good coverage)
- it's normally free
- it can be organised at relatively short notice.

## good relationships with the media

An ongoing relationship with the media, based on respect and professional integrity, will stand your organisation in good stead and help raise your public profile. Once such a relationship is established, it should make any future contact with the media easier.

Keys to good working relationships with the media include:

- Have one designated and mandated media spokesperson who can concentrate on building rapport with the media. Choose a person who has an in-depth knowledge of the organisation and an ability to articulate ideas clearly in an enthusiastic manner.
- Be honest and tactful. Never exaggerate or distort facts – people working in the media are savvy and check facts. Exaggeration and distortion lead to loss of credibility next time you offer a story.
- Approach the media only when you have something really newsworthy to offer.
- Don't keep people waiting, be prepared, be patient, don't hassle and don't quibble about small matters like appointment times. Journalists are busy people who work in a world of pressures and deadlines.
- Be welcoming and have a copy of your media release and a media kit on hand.
- Deal firmly but politely with media demands that you are not able to meet. Do not allow yourself to be coerced in any way. If you have checked and cleared your facts, you have nothing to worry about.

Pitfalls to avoid when working with the media include:

- Don't use the media as your publicity agents. They have strict codes of ethics and will not be manipulated. Their job is to report and interpret news honestly.
- Don't get offside with the media – you won't win, and you will lose future news opportunities for your organisation.

- Don't be fussy or pedantic. Everyone makes mistakes. Often mistakes are not glaringly obvious – except to you. Unless there is an obvious legal or financial reason for drawing a mistake to their attention, let it go.

## what's newsworthy?

"News" usually interests a general audience rather than only a few individuals. Generally speaking, newsworthy events are new events, but something can also be "served up" to seem new. Timing plays a large part in newsworthiness, as does a link to some other major event or news.

Ask yourself these questions to determine whether something is newsworthy:

- does your news item have human interest and touch the lives of many people?
- does your news have drama?
- does your news include people in high places?
- is your news fresh?
- who will read your media release?

### ✓ Checklist for approaching the media

Your approach to the media should be well-planned and executed. Some guidelines include:

- appoint the best media spokesperson you possibly can
- get in touch with media well before an event
- approach the journalist most concerned with your area of work or type or story. If you don't already have a contact, approach the Chief Reporter
- always make your approach in person but make an appointment first
- deal with only one journalist in each news organisation
- be obliging and helpful
- be completely honest about story content
- cover Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

*continued over...*

*Checklist for approaching the media continued...*

- be unambiguous and accurate
- do not demand coverage
- do not expect repeat coverage unless you can offer something different from last time
- supply a media kit (see following section)
- supply two tickets to functions or events you would like covered by the media
- if a photographer is wanted, organise for someone to accompany them to supply information during the event – especially the correct spelling of names
- approach radio and TV as well as newspapers, but do not refer to them as "the press".

## when the media comes to you

Media calls "out-of-the-blue" should not be responded to with "off-the-cuff" comments. This is especially important if the call relates to a tricky issue. If possible, appoint a mandated media spokesperson for your organisation and follow this procedure:

- ask exactly what the call is about
- offer to call back soon
- ask about the deadline for:
  - your response
  - the story as a whole
- give a reason for your delay e.g. say you need to get the file or you'd like to discuss it with someone first or you're in a meeting and will be free in 30 minutes etc
- if you want to refer the request on to someone else, do not give a reporter their contact name or phone number until you have checked with that person first, then get that other person to call back
- if you promise to call back, always do so, even to say you don't wish to discuss the matter any further because [give a reason]. This gives you credibility.

**Media kit checklist**

A media kit folder should be sent to all key people connected to an event you might be publicising, as well as to the media. It could contain:

- purpose, history and details of the organisers
- any relevant biographies (e.g. of a performer or invited speaker)
- details of the content or reason for the event
- photographs (uncluttered, interesting – usually of people doing something – good focus, contrast and exposure, taken close to the action, and captioned on the back with names of people, the event, what is happening and the date)
- copies of any reviews
- contact names and phone numbers
- any relevant posters or newsletters
- tickets to any paid event.

You can also prepare a more generic media kit which could be used to introduce your organisation to the media during the process of establishing good relations with them in advance of any proposed publicity. This generic media kit would include:

- your organisation's mission statement and/or philosophies
- the structure of your organisation with current contact details
- examples of the work your organisation does
- a copy of your latest magazine or newsletter
- any up-to-date leaflets or pamphlets.

## media releases

It is strongly recommended that you write a media release for any intended news item. The release is often sent out as a follow-up to a preliminary phone call. It is the key to building a successful relationship with any media and should accompany all approaches for news coverage.

**HOW TO WRITE A MEDIA RELEASE**

The main thing to remember is that a media

release is a "news" item. This means it needs to "inform" people, not sell them something. If you haven't written a media release before a good way to get into the style is to grab the latest daily newspaper and read some of their informational articles. Look at how each article is written and follow the same format.

Below we provide a checklist of things to remember and a template to help you when writing a media release.

**Media release checklist**

A checklist of things to remember when writing a media release are:

- head the release MEDIA RELEASE
- give it a succinct title
- date it
- state the source of the release i.e. who it is from
- use the first sentence and the first paragraph (the "intro") to convey the main message i.e. the essence of what you want to communicate
- focus on what is unique and interesting about your story
- give as many facts as possible (Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?)
- write in a simple straightforward style
- use active language e.g. write "Large crowds attended the opening" rather than "The opening was attended by large crowds"
- make the release as short as you can (seven paragraphs is a usual maximum)
- remember that anything you say may be put at the beginning and used as the main point of your story
- source any opinions you use
- format double-spaced with wide margins using one side of A4 paper
- write "ends" at the end of the media release
- give names and contact details for people who can offer more information
- give media outlets (radio, TV, newspapers etc) equal opportunity.

**Media release template**

MEDIA RELEASE

**[Date]**

**[Headline]** Young people taking up the challenge

**[Introduction or angle]**

READ MY LIPS is an exciting one-day event, aimed at getting young people's voices heard by society's decision-makers, on 15 May in Wellington.

*This paragraph answers the "what?" question, as well as giving an "interesting" angle or fact to get the reader's interest. It is also no more than 35 words.*

**[Body]**

The event, called READ MY LIPS, has been created by a group of young people from Wellington. Its goal is to encourage more young people to speak out about issues that are important to them by "stirring up" their thoughts and passions, and helping them to "get going" on ways to get their voices heard.

*This paragraph has the "when?" and "who?" questions.*

A key part of this event is to run training workshops for young people on how to write submissions, organise events, and other ways to get their voices out there. Young people will also share information about local and global youth issues, and encourage young people to speak out on things that are important to them.

*This paragraph gives more information about who will be at the event.*

"This is great, we are here to get our voices heard as young people by getting the skills to make that happen", said Jo, one of the organisers of the event.

*Quote from someone involved in the event, which also answers the "why?" question.*

ENDS

**[Contact]**

For more information contact: Jo Bloggs, Ph 123 4567.

*(Adapted from Aotearoa Youth Voices Toolkit, Ministry of Youth Development).*

## doing media interviews

### ✓ General media interview checklist

Some general tips on interviews for radio, TV or print include:

- find out the reporter's name (ask for a business card)
- find out the context of the interview
- be on time for the interview
- do your homework – get the facts and have back-up data on hand
- know the main message you want to convey and how to weave it into every answer you give. That way, even if your answers are cut and spliced during the editing process, your message will still come through
- write down answers to any questions you think may be asked – you can use these as a prompt, which is really useful if you're feeling a bit nervous
- speak clearly using short natural sentences and take your time
- keep to your topic – don't ramble
- ask for clarification if you don't understand a question
- if you don't know an answer to a question, be honest and say you don't know. You can also suggest that you will get back to them with an answer later on
- don't let the interviewer "rattle" you. Keep calm and respond politely and firmly. Move or lean forward into the interviewer's space if you feel they're getting hostile
- if you think you've made a mistake or said something that's wrong, don't be frightened to tell the reporter or ask them to fix it
- relax and enjoy it.

### ✓ TV and radio interview checklist

Specific tips for TV and radio interviews are:

- remember that TV is radio with pictures. This means that, for TV, you need to appear as relaxed as possible – smile when appropriate
- for TV, think about what you're wearing
- concentrate on the interviewer rather than any background technical processes
- if the interview is pre-recorded, stop and re-start if you want to change something
- for radio, because no one can see you, or read what you have said, this means your voice and how you use it is really important. Therefore it's important to use a warm vocal tone and lots of inflection
- ask if it's possible to get a list of the questions you'll be asked ahead of time
- for radio, even though there are heaps of people listening in, imagine you are talking to just one person
- it's good (if possible) to have just one or two key messages to finish the interview on, so that this will be the last thing left in the listeners' minds before the interview finishes.

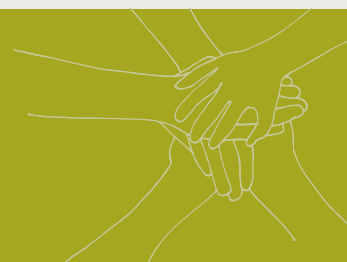
## corrections and complaints procedures

Some procedures for correcting or complaining about what the media has said include:

- If there is a matter of wrong fact, you can simply ask the media to correct it.
- If it's a matter of varying interpretation, weigh up whether you want to raise the matter again in the public eye. If you want to proceed, write a letter to the editor rather than demand a different version.
- If you have been misquoted or mistreated, go direct to the head of the news section and say so.

- Formal complaints should be a last resort. However if you wish to proceed, there are formal procedures.
  - For written media – contact NZ Press Council, P O Box 10-879, The Terrace, Wellington; Ph (04) 473 5220; Fax (04) 471 1785; website – [www.presscouncil.org.nz](http://www.presscouncil.org.nz).
  - For radio or TV – contact the Broadcasting Standards Authority, P O Box 9213, Wellington; Ph (04) 382 9508; Fax (04) 382 9543; website – [www.bsa.govt.nz](http://www.bsa.govt.nz).

# communicating with government



This part will look at communicating with:

- central government (Ministers, Members of Parliament)
- local government (regional, city and district councils).

## communicating with central government

Some of the more common ways of having your say with central government include via:

- lobbying
- a submission to a select committee
- parliamentary inquiries
- petitions to Parliament
- official information requests
- talking or writing a letter to a Minister or your local MP (Member of Parliament).

These options for communicating with politicians will be dealt with next. However, for detailed information on all of these and more, refer to [www.govt.nz/participate](http://www.govt.nz/participate).

TIP

### LOBBYING

Lobbying is essentially a planned effort to influence political decision-making (at both a central and local government level) through public relations (PR). Some lobby groups (such as the Business Roundtable) are rich and powerful and able to put a lot of resources into lobbying. Community groups seldom have much in the way of resources, but they do have the most important resource of all – people, and they can be as powerful as money.

Successful lobbying usually involves both direct and indirect lobbying. **Direct lobbying** involves meeting face-to-face with political leaders and others of influence, discussing proposals and arguing your cause (see direct lobbying checklist). **Indirect lobbying** can involve bringing pressure to bear through the media so that an issue receives public attention, in preparation for a direct approach. It may also involve visiting opposition party members or possible competitors in business.

Lobbying is important because:

- what you have to say can make a difference to policies and legislation
- it is a legitimate part of a democratic system – allowing people to have their say
- it provides a vehicle for you to communicate your kaupapa, philosophy, values or beliefs
- your perspective and knowledge is valuable and unique. Often MPs, policy-makers, councillors, officials need to be informed by people working at the “grass roots” from which they tend to be removed.



### Direct lobbying checklist

The following checklist can be used as a guide to directly lobbying someone, including a Minister or local MP:

- make appointments with those you want to lobby and ask how much time is available so you can use it to your best advantage
- have two or three well-briefed speakers
- prepare a written summary of your case, your organisation’s origin and credentials and its area of work, refer to it at the meeting, then submit it when you depart

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*Direct lobbying checklist continued...*

- agree on the order of speaking and the issues each speaker will address
  - assign someone to be the record-keeper
  - arrive five minutes early
  - introduce your party
  - note who is present and who you might best contact later
  - make your most important points first
  - be ready to summarise if your time is cut short
  - understate your case rather than overstate it – you only want the person to agree with you, not join you
  - present your case clearly
  - use visual aids if possible
  - be confident or at least give the appearance of confidence
  - leave when you have covered all the ground
  - write a note of thanks for the time you were given to present your case.
- In the case of a local Member of Parliament (MP), where electorate “clinics” are usually run on Saturdays and/or Sundays:
- make an appointment through the electorate office
  - remember the meeting is more informal and probably shorter with less media interest than a Parliamentary visit
  - make a particular effort to gather and summarise expressions of local support (which to an MP are potential votes)
  - be as prepared as you would be for a Parliamentary visit.

### MAKING A SUBMISSION TO A SELECT COMMITTEE

One of the ways you can get your voice heard by government and be part of the decision-making process, is to share your opinion on a new law (all

of which start life off as a Bill) or change an old one. This is called making a submission to a select committee.

#### Select committees

There are 13 different subject select committees (see details below). Each of these committees has about eight MPs from different parties in Parliament on them and each focuses on one or two big national topics like “health” or “justice”. There are also 5 specialist select committees (see details below) which deal more with procedural matters. The membership of select committees can change.

The current 13 subject select committees are:

- **Commerce** – business development, commerce, communications, consumer affairs, energy, information technology, insurance and superannuation
- **Education and Science** – education, education review, industry training, research, science and technology
- **Finance and Expenditure** – audit of the Crown’s and departmental financial statements, Government finance, revenue and taxation
- **Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade** – customs, defence, disarmament and arms control, foreign affairs, immigration and trade
- **Government Administration** – civil defence, cultural affairs, fitness, sport and leisure, internal affairs, Pacific Island affairs, Prime Minister and Cabinet, racing, services to Parliament, State services, statistics, tourism, women’s affairs and youth affairs
- **Health**
- **Justice and Electoral** – Crown legal and drafting services, electoral matters, human rights and justice
- **Law and Order** – corrections, courts, criminal law, police and serious fraud
- **Local Government and Environment** – conservation, environment and local government

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- **Māori Affairs**
- **Primary Production** – agriculture, biosecurity, fisheries, forestry, lands and land information
- **Social Services** – housing, senior citizens, social welfare, veterans' affairs and work and income support
- **Transport and Industrial Relations** – accident compensation, industrial relations, labour, occupational health and safety, transport and transport safety.

The current 5 specialist select committees are:

- **Business** – facilitation of House business
- **Officers of Parliament** – appropriations and appointments of the Auditor-General, the Ombudsmen, and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment
- **Privileges** – matters of parliamentary privilege
- **Regulations Review** – examination of legal instruments variously known as "regulations", "delegated legislation" and "subordinate legislation" made under delegated powers in an Act of Parliament
- **Standing Orders** – House procedures and practices.

One of the jobs of the select committee is to examine Bills and then report back to Parliament. The select committee finds out what New Zealanders think through a public submission process. This means that anyone can see what you (or your group) have said.

### How do you know what Bills are being proposed?

Most Bills are advertised in newspapers around New Zealand to encourage submissions. You can see which submissions are being called for or what submissions different organisations have made on Bills. Go to the "Select Committees" section of the Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives website and click on either

"submissions called for" or "submissions received" – [www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz](http://www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz).

### The submission process

A submission may be written or verbal (sometimes called oral or spoken) or a combination of both. You may speak to a written submission and it is usual to present written material to support a verbal submission. An effective and powerful submission is a simple one that sets out your own or the group's views on the subject.

### Written submissions

Some useful tips for making a written submission to a select committee are:

- When select committees call for submissions, they advertise in the "public notices" section of the newspaper and also note this on the website [www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz](http://www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz).
- Get a copy of the Bill you wish to make a submission about. You can buy this from Bennett's Government bookshops or download it from the website [www.knowledge-basket.co.nz](http://www.knowledge-basket.co.nz). The "explanatory note" at the start of the Bill gives useful information about what the Bill is trying to do. It is usually easier to read than the Bill itself.
- Discuss the Bill as a group. Do a bit of research. What are other people saying about it? It might be useful to plan your submission with other groups who share your views.
- Sort out the key points you wish to make about the Bill. In most cases limit this to 1 to 3 main points to keep your submission focused.
- Write your draft submission. Say:
  - Who you are – give your credentials for making a submission on the Bill (it's all good public relations). Include your name and contact details.
  - Whether you support or oppose the Bill – and why.
  - What impact it might have on the people that you work with.

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- Keep your submission short and to the point. Use sub headings for the different points you make.
- Try to be constructive – even when you totally oppose the Bill.
- Get someone else to check your submission before you send it off. Ask them to check:
  - Is your message clear – does it make sense?
  - Does the submission keep to the subject of the Bill?
  - Does anything need to be explained more? Remember, you are the expert in your field, you can't expect the members of the select committee to know the details about your area.
  - Check the spelling and grammar – it all makes an impression.
- Say whether you want to appear before the committee. This can be very useful to make a point – especially if you are based in or near Wellington or the committee is hearing submissions in your area.
- Check the closing date, how many copies you need and send it off. Remember to keep a copy – especially if you are going to appear before the committee.

### Oral submissions

Some tips on appearing before a select committee and presenting an oral submission are:

- Find out who is on the committee, and, if possible what their views might be. Identify your potential allies on the committee. Your task is to help them build their argument for/against the Bill.
- If you can, go along to a meeting of the select committee and observe how it operates. A weekly schedule is posted on the [www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz](http://www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz) website. This indicates what sessions are open to the public.

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*Oral submissions continued...*

- Appearing before the committee is an opportunity to give some “life” to your submission. You will be invited to present your submission and then answer questions. Keep your presentation short and:
  - Introduce yourself, your group and your credentials for making a submission on this topic.
  - Outline the key points in your submission very briefly, but don't go into details. Committee members will have already read your submission so it's a waste of time to read it out.
  - Give an example of how this proposed legislation will affect people you work with. This adds a personal touch that can get the committee members more interested than statistics.
  - Don't be put off by difficult questions – stick to your points and what you know. It's a good idea to make sure you have someone with direct fieldwork experience who can illustrate your points with anecdotes and examples that give the human dimension.

### TIP

For further details on the submission process (written and verbal), refer to the booklet *Making a Submission to a Parliamentary Select Committee* available from the Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives by:

- writing to them at Parliament Buildings, Wellington
- phoning them on (04) 471 9999
- faxing them on (04) 473 2439
- referring to their website [www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz](http://www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz).

The Ministry of Youth Development's *Aotearoa Youth Voices Tool Kit* also includes a useful resource *Action guide 8: Write a submission to Parliament*.

## COMMUNICATING WITH GOVERNMENT

**PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES**

Select committees can also hold inquiries within their subject area in response to some community concern. They can call for public submissions and request evidence from organisations that may be the subject of the inquiry. After considering the evidence, committees may report to Parliament with findings and recommendations. The Government must respond to recommendations within 90 days.

These parliamentary inquiries vary in nature according to the relevant concerns at the time. Examples of some recent inquiries include:

- inquiry into obesity and type two diabetes in New Zealand (report published 26 April 2006 by Health Select Committee)
- inquiry into the quality and care of services provision for disabled people and how they might be improved (report published 25 August 2006 by the Social Services Select Committee).

You can find out what inquiries are open for submission by referring to the Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives website (under *Other Business Before Select Committees*) – [www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz](http://www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz).

TIP

**PETITIONS TO PARLIAMENT**

People can request that the House of Representatives take action on a matter of public policy or law, or to address a personal grievance, by presenting a petition to the House, through their local Member of Parliament (MP).

A petition is a document signed by one person or many people. The petition is referred to the appropriate committee, which decides whether to seek submissions from affected people or organisations. If the committee reports to the House with recommendations, the Government must respond within 90 days.

Petitions don't generally contain the same large amount of supporting evidence as a submission. However petitions should:

- have the front page signed

- have each page containing signatures headed with the petitioner's request
- use respectful, moderate, and to-the-point language
- not have any documents attached to it.

TIP

For full details on how to prepare a petition and the petition process, refer to the booklet *Petitioning the House of Representatives* available from the Office of the Clerk of House of Representatives website – [www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz](http://www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz).

**OFFICIAL INFORMATION REQUESTS****What is official information?**

Official information is any information held by the Government, including:

- Ministers
- government departments
- local authorities, territorial and regional councils and community boards
- state-owned enterprises
- educational institutions, including Boards of Trustees
- public hospitals.

TIP

A full list of the organisations you can request information from is listed in the Directory of Official Information available from public libraries or Ministry of Justice website – [www.justice.govt.nz](http://www.justice.govt.nz).

**The law**

The two Acts governing access to official information are:

- the Official Information Act 1982
- the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

The guiding principle is that information must be made available unless good reason exists under the Acts for withholding it.

### The process

Anyone can make a request for information from those people and organisations listed above and the process is the same for all of them.

Some useful tips on the official information request process are:

- It's best to put your question in writing and explain clearly what you are asking. Remember to include your address so they know where to send the reply.
- All requests should be answered within 20 working days. If it will take longer, the organisation or Minister will tell you about the delay and the reason for it.
- Generally, the first hour of time spent processing a request and the first 20 pages of photocopying, are free. A fee may be charged but this has to be reasonable and related to the cost of providing the answer to your request.

### TIP

For more details on official information requests see the following links:

- Directory of Official Information – [www.justice.govt.nz/pubs/reports/2003/DOI-03-05/index.html](http://www.justice.govt.nz/pubs/reports/2003/DOI-03-05/index.html)
- Ministry of Justice Charging Guidelines for Official Information Act 1982 Requests – [www.justice.govt.nz/pubs/reports/2002/charging-guidelines/index.html](http://www.justice.govt.nz/pubs/reports/2002/charging-guidelines/index.html)
- Official Information: Your Right To Know – [www.justice.govt.nz/pubs/other/pamphlets/2001/info\\_act.html](http://www.justice.govt.nz/pubs/other/pamphlets/2001/info_act.html)

### WRITING TO POLITICIANS

Every day politicians make decisions about things that affect your community and your life. If you want them to make decisions that will be good for you, grab a pen and paper and let them know what you think.

You could write a letter by yourself or you could organise a letter-writing campaign.

The first thing you need to work out is who the best person is to write to.

- **Electorate MPs** are usually interested in what people from their electorate think about an issue.
- **Cabinet Ministers** are the decision-makers in the Government and have areas of responsibility (portfolios). So write to the Minister who best covers the issue you are concerned about.
- **The Prime Minister (PM)** is the leader of the Government. Write to the PM about big national and international issues.

The relevant contact details for these people can be found in various places.

- Your local electorate MPs' contact details are available at [www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz](http://www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz).
- Cabinet Ministers, their portfolios and contact details are available at [www.beehive.govt.nz](http://www.beehive.govt.nz).
- You can write to any MP, Minister or the Prime Minister for FREE at:  
(Full name)  
Freepost Parliament  
PO Box 18888  
Wellington.

Some important things to remember when writing to politicians include:

- explain why a particular issue is important to you and your community or New Zealanders as a whole
- don't think that the politician will already know everything
- be clear and to the point
- be constructive
- always use facts
- make sure that you state your name and address, so that they can write back to you.

## communicating with local government

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIPS

While central government is mainly concerned with national issues, local government has a local or regional focus. Local government (which includes regional, city and district councils) has responsibilities for community "well-being" (which covers social, economic, cultural and environmental aspects). However, everything that local government does is within the legislative framework established and maintained by Parliament.

### WAYS OF HAVING YOUR SAY

There are different ways that you can have your say on local government matters. These include:

- making a submission on things such as:
  - a council plan (including the long term council community plan or annual plan)
  - publicly notified resource consents
  - council consultation processes
  - other proposals
- official information requests (same process as detailed above for central government)
- attending public council meetings
- direct lobbying.

### Long Term Council Community Plans (LTCCP)

The LTCCP is the key long term planning tool for councils and it sets out a council's priorities in the medium to long term. It outlines how the council intends to contribute to community outcomes and it provides the main opportunity for the community to participate in local decision-making.

The LTCCP is the primary planning document against which annual plans and annual reports are considered and against which communities can gauge whether or not councils are on track in terms of achieving the aims outlined through the community outcomes processes. Every three years, citizens have the opportunity to express their views on the LTCCP.

### Annual plan

The annual plan process focuses on year-to-year budgets. Councils prepare an annual plan in each of the two years between LTCCP reviews, and set out in them what the council plans to do in the next twelve months to move towards achieving its goals. These plans are adopted before the commencement of the financial year in July, following a submission process.

### Annual report

The annual report tells the community whether the council has done what the LTCCP said the council intended to do. The report also provides details of what has been spent, as well as indicating what progress the council has made towards achieving community outcomes. Annual reports must be adopted by 31 October each year.

### Submissions

The submission procedures involved, and the relevant forms to be completed, are set out on your local council's website. Often there are online forms available on which to make your submission e.g. on publicly notified applications for resource consent. There may also be online survey forms available to be used for different circumstances (see your local council website for details).

### Attending public council meetings

Anyone can attend any public meetings of the council or its committees. Councils meet as regularly as they consider appropriate for the issues facing their communities. They publish a monthly schedule of their ordinary council and committee meetings. These are usually found in the public notices of local newspapers and on the council's website. The public can be excluded from public meetings in certain circumstances.

### Lobbying

- To lobby council officers, use much the same process as for a local MP.
- Make a preliminary visit to a council meeting to see who is most likely to be effective in your situation, or to hear a debate about the subject of your concern.
- Do some research to find out who is taking an active interest and what position or opinion they already hold.

## TIP

Most councils include copies of proposals currently out for consultation and the relevant consultation procedures for having your say on their website, or they are available from the council offices. See Councils A-Z at [www.localcouncils.govt.nz](http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz) for contact details.

### MONITORING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

It is useful to know that there are a number of central government agencies involved with monitoring local government's performance in a number of roles. These roles include the handling of complaints about the activities and operation of local government. For example:

- **The Department of Internal Affairs** provides information about local government to Ministers, councils and the public.
- **The Office of the Ombudsmen** will investigate complaints against local authorities if someone thinks they have been treated unfairly by a local authority.
- **The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment** considers complaints from people about a local authority in terms of any decision it has made relating to environmental issues.

## TIP

Refer to the respective websites of the above central government agencies for further information on how to get involved in these monitoring procedures.

# where to go for more information



## PR/communications plans

- Two guides that can be used together to help with PR planning are:
  - Writing a PR or communications plan* available electronically at [www.nicva.org/uploads/docs/r\\_writgPR\\_06022003.pdf](http://www.nicva.org/uploads/docs/r_writgPR_06022003.pdf)
  - Developing a PR or communications plan* available electronically at [www.nicva.org/uploads/docs/r\\_PRCCommunicationPlan\\_080803.pdf](http://www.nicva.org/uploads/docs/r_PRCCommunicationPlan_080803.pdf)

Both are published by Media Resource NI and are free.

- IMPACS training manuals for not-for-profits:
  - [www.impacs.org/communications/PubResources](http://www.impacs.org/communications/PubResources)
- Toolkit for Managers*, Public Health WWW Networking Project, funded by Ministry of Health. See – [www.publichealth.org.nz](http://www.publichealth.org.nz).

## media

- Managing Your Voluntary Agency in New Zealand* (Chapter 7: Developing Public and Political Relations, pp 131-151 and Chapter 8: Communicating Effectively, pp 153-161). Published by New Zealand Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations (NZFWO). 1993. \$25 or may be available from some libraries.
- Seizing the Moment II: Turning Community Ideas into Action* (Chapter F: Sending Messages pp 67-85). Published by Community Work Training Advisory Committee, Nelson. 1994. Out of print but may be available from some libraries.
- Working with the Media*, Te Papa National Services Resource Guides I He Rauemi, published by Te Papa National Services. See – [www.tepapa.govt.nz](http://www.tepapa.govt.nz).

- Website [www.mediaguide.org.uk](http://www.mediaguide.org.uk).
- Communications Tool Kit*, ComVoices. See [www.nzfvwo.org.nz/comvoices](http://www.nzfvwo.org.nz/comvoices) (search under "Resources").

## communication tools

- Aotearoa Youth Voices leaflet* and *Aotearoa Youth Voices Toolkit*, Ministry of Youth Development. See [www.youthvoices.govt.nz](http://www.youthvoices.govt.nz).

## central and local government

- For papers/guides about participating in all government processes refer to – [www.govt.nz/participate/#node76](http://www.govt.nz/participate/#node76).
- For information on communicating with local government refer to – [www.localcouncils.govt.nz](http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz)
- For information on making submissions refer to – [www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz](http://www.clerk.parliament.govt.nz).
- For information on official information requests refer to the Ministry of Justice who published *Official Information: Your Right to Know* (available to download at [www.justice.govt.nz](http://www.justice.govt.nz)) or contact the Ministry of Justice, PO Box 180, Wellington.

## publicity material

- For some suggestions on how to develop excellent publicity material see Churches Youth Ministry Association (CYMA) website – [www.youthministry.org.nz](http://www.youthministry.org.nz).