

Sharing good news

Guidance for commissioned providers

Primary Health Tasmania is keen for good news stories associated with its commissioned services to be shared among stakeholders – including service referrers, users, and the broader public. This is a great way of celebrating success and increasing awareness about a service, particularly a new service.

This document aims to provide some tips on sharing good news stories through the media, newsletters and websites.

The communications capacity (in-house or outsourced) of our commissioned providers varies from organisation to organisation. It is always much more powerful for service providers to be able to tell their stories first-hand and liaise direct with the media. However, Primary Health Tasmania's communications and marketing team is on hand for support and advice if needed (see contact details at end).

We are also keen to be involved in good news stories if there is an opportunity – e.g. by providing quotes, offering an interview, and being involved in a photo shoot/media event. As our funding source, Australian Government representatives are also interested in media opportunities.

What is a news story?

A **news story** is an article focusing on something that's new. News stories are usually concise, covering key developments with minimal background information.

Other kinds of articles include:

- **human interest stories** – 'softer' articles that don't have a 'hard news' angle, and are often written as much for entertainment as for news purposes
- **feature stories** – longer articles that explore issues in more detail, with more scope for including background information
- **profiles** – longer articles that focus on a person
- **opinion pieces** and **editorials** – providing comment on an issue or event.

Finding a good news story

Consider what's happening in relation to your service that:

- is **new** – you might be taking in the first lot of clients for your new service; or extending your service to take in a new client group or to cover a new geographic area; or releasing a new resource
- has **achieved an outcome** – this is often best told through a case study, e.g. a client who has benefited from your service
- has reached a **milestone** - e.g. 50 or 100 clients through the service
- involves a **'call to action'** – e.g. seeking feedback or input.

Writing your story

Many of these principles and tips can be applied equally to writing a media release or an article for a newsletter or website.

Any good news story will answer each of the following questions as early as possible:

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

For example, if you're writing about a new service you're rolling out, your story will need to cover:

- **Who** is the service for (e.g. which population group)? Who is providing and funding the services?
- **What** services will be delivered and – where relevant – under which program?
- **Where** will the services be available? E.g. in which regions/towns/local government areas?
- **When** will this happen? What is the contract period, and when will the results be seen?
- **Why** are the services being delivered? What need will they address/what do they aim to achieve?
- **How** will the services actually work? E.g. outreach; telehealth; regular clinics in local communities. How do they work in with other local services/health professionals, such as a client's regular GP?

Other relevant information could include service cost (to the client) and eligibility criteria (especially when writing for referrers).

The 'inverted pyramid'

News stories have the most important facts at the beginning and then work down from there.

Don't start with background information – lead with the 'news angle', or 'hook', which is used to grab readers' attention to make them want to read the rest of the story. This first line of the news story/media release should be a single sentence of no more than 30 words. It should contain enough information to give readers a good overview of the entire story.

The rest of the article explains and expands on the beginning.

Keep in mind that your story may be edited due to space limitations, and editors tend to cut content from the bottom of a story. So put your least important information at the bottom.

General tips

- Try to highlight the **benefits** of the issue you're writing about in the first line or two, whether it's benefits to Tasmanians, providers or others.
- Focus on **achievements, outcomes, progress** to date, plus **what's coming next**. Think about any **calls to action** for readers.
- Think about who your **audience** is, and write accordingly. Don't assume much prior knowledge. If it's a broad audience, write for the reader who is likely to know the least about the topic.
- Consider including some **quotes** from a spokesperson. Quotes give a story life, colour and personality. Don't use quotes for dry facts. They're good for covering the 'why' – e.g.: "Practice nurses work in a complex and constantly changing environment, and we hope this new 'online community' will make them feel better equipped to meet their daily challenges."
- Keep it **simple** and **concise**. Don't use flowery, heavily descriptive or technical language. Keep your sentences and paragraphs short.
- Avoid the use of **acronyms** wherever possible, even if it's an acronym that's very familiar to you. If you do use an acronym, spell it in full first, e.g. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).
- Include any **acknowledgements** that are needed – e.g. if an initiative is funded under a particular Australian Government initiative.
- Find out what your **word limit** is, and stick to it.

Include **contact details** for more information. This might be a website link, phone number and email.

Sharing your story

There is a range of channels available to promote your good news. They include:

- **The media.** Daily newspapers, local community papers, television and radio news, talkback radio, and magazines such as *Prime Times*. A consumer interviewee is particularly important for newspapers and television, although this isn't always appropriate (e.g. where a service is for vulnerable people). Wherever possible, tailor your story to the media outlet you are targeting. E.g. you have a much better chance of getting a run in the *Advocate* if the story is based in the north west or you can offer a client and/or health professional provider interviewees from the north west. For live radio, it's generally best to only offer up interviewees who are experienced with media interviews, completely across the subject matter, and can think on their feet. Consumers/clients are often not suitable for live radio interviews.
- **Newsletters.** As well as your own publications, the regular newsletters of health professional peak bodies and community organisations are a great way to reach your target audiences, such as potential referrers and clients. Find out their publication audience, timelines and specifications and provide an article that fits the bill.
- **Websites and social media.** Encourage relevant organisations to share or link to your own content, or send them some suggested social media content they can post themselves. If you write a newsletter article, consider putting it on your website and linking to it from social media as well. Just remember any permissions you might need – have you asked anyone featured in a photo to sign an image consent form?
- **Primary Health Tasmania publications.** We can promote relevant stories in our own publications, on our website and social media platforms.

Feel free to contact Primary Health Tasmania's communications and marketing team to discuss the best channel for your good news story, including contacts at media outlets.

Keeping us in the loop

Please let us know if you're planning any media activity – we love to be able to give our staff a heads-up if something's going to run on the news or in the paper from one of our commissioned providers. You don't need our approval before initiating media contact, but we are keen to stay in the loop. We also like to see any resulting coverage, if you can send through a copy.

As mentioned above, Primary Health Tasmania and the Australian Government would like to be involved in media opportunities relating to commissioned services.

If you receive a media inquiry relating to activity commissioned by Primary Health Tasmania that may result in negative coverage or relates to a sensitive or controversial issue, please notify your Primary Health Tasmania program contact or our communications and marketing team as soon as possible.

Acknowledging Primary Health Tasmania support

The Australian Government's support of a program/service – through Primary Health Tasmania – should be acknowledged in any article or media release written by a commissioned provider. Suitable wording would be:

This [program/service/activity/event] is supported by funding from Primary Health Tasmania (Tasmania PHN) through the Australian Government's Primary Health Networks Program.

Of course, we acknowledge that providers have no control over the final wording used by the media or in external newsletters.

It is important that commissioned providers do not seek to represent the views of Primary Health Tasmania. Please contact the communications and marketing team if a Primary Health Tasmania perspective is needed for a story.

More information

If you have any queries or need more information, please get in touch with your program contact or the communications and marketing team:

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