

# *GUIDE TO MANAGING HISTORICAL SOCIETIES*

## **Involving People**

### **Media**

Generating positive and regular coverage in the media about your historical society and the work it does, provides free publicity for your group, increases awareness of who you are and what you do, and encourages membership.

#### **Developing media contacts**

Before starting to prepare any media campaign make sure you have an up to date media contact list in place. Include everyone in the media you have contact with or think might be interested in a story on your group.

Break down your list into long lead and short lead media. Long lead publications are those that come out monthly or quarterly and require months of lead-time. Short lead media are your daily newspapers and weekly publications. Event listings in metro papers often require up to 6 weeks notice. Also consider online media and event listings.

To find basic contact details for many of the newspapers, radio and television stations operating in your area, visit the Our Community media contact guide:

[http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing\\_article.jsp?articleId=1423](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1423)

The *Our Community* website also includes handy hints on how to create and use your media contact list.

#### **Defining media roles**

Once you have your media contact list in place, spend some time deciding who is best in your organisation to be the:

1. spokesperson  
They need to be well spoken, articulate, have good judgement and be a good listener
2. writer  
They need to have excellent written skills, be able to get a succinct message across and make sure consistent messages come out of your group's communication efforts.

#### **Deciding on a media event**

It is important to remember that not everything is 'newsworthy'. What you think is a big story and what the media thinks is worthy of a mention may not add up! It is therefore vital to remove yourself from your group and look at the newsworthiness of an event from an outsider's perspective.

The following elements help make something newsworthy:

- new history projects
- novelty angles (something unexpected of a history group!)
- linking your news to wider issues in the community or something recently announced in the media
- a local angle and/or
- strong reader interest in the event that is taking place

For more ideas on how to generate interest in your activities, have a look at the *Our Community* page of tips:

[http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing\\_article.jsp?articleId=1810](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/marketing/marketing_article.jsp?articleId=1810)

### **Preparing the media release**

Before you start writing the media release, prepare some simple information on what you are promoting:

**WHO** are you?

**WHAT** are you publicising?

**WHEN** is the event happening?

**WHERE** is it happening?

**WHY** are you doing it?

**HOW** are you doing it?

The answers to these questions will then form the basis of your media release.

The media release needs to include:

- a heading
- information on the event
- event details (dates, prices, times, bookings etc) and
- the relevant contact details of the person the journalist can call for more information

It is important that you:

- grab the journalist's attention in the first paragraph
- keep it to no more than 1 page in length
- clearly brand your organisation (ie include your logo or prepare the media release on letterhead)
- use clear, simple language that everyone will understand
- include quotes of interest from your spokesperson that can be used in the journalist's article and
- always proof read your release before you send it

An example of a media release is at the end of this section for your reference.

**Sending the media release**

It is important that, after finalising the release, you spend some time working out how best to distribute it.

This includes considering who would be the best person to receive it and when they are likely to need it by to ensure it gets coverage before the event or activity.

You should use your media list to help you do this, and update it along the way with any information you find out from this process.



ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC.

## AN ODE TO THE ONION

Victorians are invited to pay homage to the humble onion and enjoy a feast of onion soup, as the Royal Historical Society of Victoria presents its Lunchtime Talk Topic for May: **Onions in Gippsland: 1900 – 1927.**

This appetizing lecture, to be held on **Thursday 22 May at 12.30pm**, explores the history of onion farming in Gippsland in a one-hour discussion by historian and onion expert, John Murphy OAM.

“Onions were first grown in Australia in NSW soon after the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, but it was not until 1855-60 that commercial production began in the Western districts of Victoria,” said Mr Murphy.

“Production in Gippsland began in 1900 where the growing of the Brown Spanish variety on the naturally fertile soils around Leongatha enabled many landowners to use this crop to improve their pastures.

“Returns to growers however were variable, and in 1936 an Onion Marketing Board was formed to ensure that growers obtained a reasonable return for their labour.

“This Board operated until 1975 and succeeded in stabilizing market returns, but it indirectly led to its own demise, with consequent price stability resulting in increased production in neighbouring States.

“The presentation will also explore the changing techniques of onion growing, and the impact of mechanization and herbicides on the land.”

Onion growing was an integral part of farming on John Murphy's family farm in Leongatha North for over 40 years. His interest in history led to the writing of several books on the area, with major works being *No Parallel - The Woorayl Shire 1888-1988* and *On the Ridge - the Shire of Mirboo 1894-1994*. In January 2004, John was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in recognition of his contribution to the history of South Gippsland.

The event will be held in the former Australian Army Medical Corps Drill Hall, an impressive space, listed on the Historic Buildings register for its state-wide architectural and historical significance.

Formed in 1909, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV) is committed to collecting, researching and sharing an understanding of the history of Victoria. Housing the most extensive single information resource on the history of Melbourne and Victoria, collections are open Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm. The RHSV is a community organisation that relies on membership subscriptions. Join today and help promote and preserve the history of Victoria – [www.historyvictoria.org.au](http://www.historyvictoria.org.au)

**Lecture:** Onions in Gippsland: 1900 – 1927  
**Date:** Thursday 22 May 2008  
**Venue:** Royal Historical Society of Victoria  
239 A'Beckett Street, Melbourne (entry via William Street)  
**Time:** 12.30pm lunch; 1pm – 2pm lecture  
**Cost:** \$5.00 members of the RHSV; \$10.00 non-members.  
**Bookings essential:** t: (03) 9326 9288 e: [office@historyvictoria.org.au](mailto:office@historyvictoria.org.au)  
**Media enquiries:** Mary Jane Smith on 5555 5555