



CHAPTER NINETEEN
GUIDE TO MEDIA RELATIONS

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RNZRSA GUIDE TO MEDIA RELATIONS

19.1 Foreword

New Zealand's media are influential stakeholders for the RSA. Developing relationships with news organisations and journalists offers an effective and efficient way to reach a broad audience.

RNZRSA actively represents RSA interests and promotes national initiatives relating to support for and remembrance of the service and sacrifice of all NZ's military personnel, and their dependents.

Within New Zealand's communities, local RSAs have many opportunities to positively engage with media, also. Community and provincial media outlets provide one vehicle through which RSAs can generate and maintain public awareness, engagement and support.

Local RSAs offer relevant, local understanding and knowledge of the many diverse situations involving current and former service personnel. Together, RSAs organise hundreds of remembrance activities every year, operate critical support networks for current and former service personnel and their families, and serve many other functions in the community.

Telling these stories effectively is paramount to our ability to continue to serve in the future. However, "getting in the media" is only a means to an end – never the end itself. Awareness without wider purpose serves little function.

19.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to assist RSAs in developing and maintaining effective relationships with media organisations.

If you require advice or assistance on handling any media contact, contact the RNZRSA Communications and Marketing Manager, who is more than happy to talk through any issues.

19.2 The New Zealand Media

Successful media relationships are based on relevance, consistency, and capturing public interest. Policy matters and issues which affect the greater good of the RSA family need to be handled with one voice – in the first instance, that of the RSA National President.

RNZRSA will provide information what activities the organisation is pursuing through channels including:

- Briefings to the District Presidents' forum
- Electronic communications, directly to local RSA executives and the membership
- Internet websites, at www.rsa.org.nz, and by social media.

19.2.1 A Definition of the New Zealand Media

In this document, Media refers to organisations publishing online, in print, by television, radio and other sources for the purposes of providing the public with news and information.

The New Zealand media can be divided into several categories:

- National news media
- Provincial news media
- Community news media
- Magazines
- Industry publications
- Websites

The sector has been having and will continue to have significant structural changes. Continued centralisation and shifts are expected.

Developing a good situational awareness and strong personal relationships with individual journalists based on trust, consistent positive interactions, a reputation for professionalism, and understanding and delivering “a good yarn” are essential if you want sustained success in this area.

19.3 Roles and Responsibilities

19.3.1 RNZRSA Responsibilities

The RNZRSA has national responsibility to RSA members to represent their views. This responsibility includes:

- Working with media outlets to provide national comment, content and context.
- Issuing media releases and otherwise influencing discussion to promote positive perception of the RSA family and issues affecting us.
- Building and maintaining effective relationships with key journalists, influencers and others in the sector.
- Facilitating publication of messaging supportive of RSA.

When RNZRSA issues a media release, this will be forwarded to District Presidents and the RNZRSA Board, and posted on the RSA website.

The RSA's primary spokesperson for RSA affairs is the National President.

The National President may delegate comment as best suits the nature of the media enquiry. This is highly contextual, and decided on a case-by-case basis.

19.3.2 Key messages

Our key messages about what the RSA does, who it's for, and why it matters:

- RSA honours those who have served in the past, and supports those still with us.
- We recognise and remember the service and sacrifice of all New Zealanders who have served – from the Land Wars to current deployments; both those who fell and those who returned home afterward.
- The RSA is here to support all current and former service personnel: our oldest are over 100, the youngest in their early 20s. We support their dependents, too.
- New Zealand has about 31,000 veterans – 11,000 were from the period from WWII to Vietnam, with 20,000 serving in New Zealand's 41 overseas deployments post-Vietnam.
- Support needs have changed, and the RSA has changed with it; exposure to trauma can result in injuries; both those we can see, and those that we can't – like Post Traumatic Stress Injury.
- Any current or former service member can access support from the RSA, whether they are a member or not.

19.3.2 Guidelines for RSAs

Local RSAs can gain significantly from developing and maintaining effective working relationships with those working in media in their areas.

RSAs can gain significant publicity and profile in their communities promoting activities including:

- Local events – especially those related to Remembrance, or otherwise doing something worthwhile or positive in the community.
- Support work you are doing (but protect the confidentiality of those you are supporting – it is their right to tell their own story, if they choose to).
- Projects that engage or bring together the community.
- Local initiatives – especially those that demonstrate community leadership, or “sort out” an issue.
- Successes, achievements, milestones or notable life stories of local members.

NB: A good rule of thumb for “newsworthiness”: if you would tell it to a group of people, and everyone would stop their conversations, listen, then tell their friends later, you're probably onto a strong idea.

Members of the RSA family are doing positive work, all year round.

Bad news is easy, cheap and ultimately offers nothing of value to anyone.

Good news – stories about people doing work that matters to their communities – inspire, empower and encourage. They can also offer a pathway, shine a light, and make things easier and better for others.

19.4 Communicating With the Media

When dealing with media representative, make sure you have a story to discuss, and facts to support it. Journalists are busy people, working to constant deadlines, in stressful situations. They will only talk to you if the contact translates into stories – so make it easy for them.

If you want to pitch a story and aren't sure how to, or if you are looking for advice on how best to answer a journalist's questions, contact the RNZRSA Communications and Marketing Manager.

19.4.1 Establishing a Database

Local RSAs can develop a database of the provincial and community media in their area. Useful information includes:

- Name of individual journalists/reporters, and the outlet they work for
- Phone numbers and email addresses
- What/where they cover (their "round")

Update this database often, as journalists move often, and staff turnover in newsrooms is high.

19.4.2 Maintain Regular Contact

Effective relations between media and the RSAs will assist in obtaining coverage through the media. Once initial contact has been made, follow up with monthly calls and /or meetings. Always have something to offer, and listen to their feedback.

As the media industry is in a state of significant structural change, you may find have to explain to new journalists who you are, what you do, what the RSA does, and why it matters.

They are often young, community-minded and usually have strong ideals based in fairness, as well as exploring what it means to be a Kiwi. They are also trained, and ethically-inclined, to hunt down and expose cheats, bullies, thieves and liars.

NB: Your personal relationship with local media personnel is your most valuable asset. Assist them – but be aware, they will always write the story they want to write.

19.4.3 Media Releases

Media releases are one of the easiest methods of communicating with the media. They provide the writer with the opportunity to provide clear, concise information in a manner that is useable by the media.

Media releases should only be used when there is something to say. Good journalists will use a release as a starting point –ensure the contact person is available to speak to it comment or even give them “a little extra”, to progress the matter, and build the relationship.

Appendix One provides guidelines for writing media releases

APPENDIX ONE: GUIDELINES TO WRITING AN EFFECTIVE MEDIA RELEASE

Overview

A media releases can be an effective way to present information.

A release (or advisory) is aimed at enticing the media into covering a story.

The key points to consider are:

- The 'lead' paragraph. Make this less than 30 words, and get to the point.
- The style (order, language and quotations)
- The layout (length and contact details)
- Effectively answering six questions: What, who, when, where, how and why.

Media releases will be judged on their timeliness and relevance to the medium's readers/listeners/viewers.

A successful media release will either be used "as is", or encourage the media to contact your organisation for further information.

Layout

- Media releases should include an RSA logo, for easy source identification.
- The date and the words "Media Release" or "Media Statement" should be included.
- Make the font legible, professional and easy to read quickly.
- Brief is best – four to six paragraphs is plenty. If they want more, they will contact you.
- Give them strong photo opportunities. They like pictures of people doing things.
- The spokesperson's contact details must be at the end of the page.

Style

- Media releases should only focus on one key message.
- Points must be addressed in terms of their importance with the most important point first.
- Media releases must be simply and factually written and able to be understood by a 12-year-old.
- Ensure the spokesperson is named, credible, likable, and available to speak.