YOUTH Voices TOOLKIT

> Young people have valuable perspectives, experiences, and ideas that can enrich decision-making right now.
>
> Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) - Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi Youth Advisory Group member

MINISTRY OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO TAIOHI
Administered by the Ministry of Social Development

How to make this toolkit work for you

"The government is looking at changing a law that will affect me.
I want to...
I think we need better access to mental health services for young people.
I want to...
I think it would be good to have more in-person events in my community.
I want to..."

Every day, decisions are being made which affect young people and it's important that young people get their voices heard by decision-makers.

The Youth Voices Toolkit is a practical guide filled with ideas for creating positive change for young people. There are three key sections: Making it Happen, Influencing Decision-Makers, and Working With the Media. The toolkit is designed so that you can use the information that applies to you and helps you identify what you want to achieve. You can dip in and out of it, depending on where you're at with sharing your voice.

If you have an idea and want to do something about it, these action guides will help you get started. They provide examples of how to create an action plan, consult with young people, use social media to share your voice, run meetings, and work in a group.

If you want to engage with your local and central government decision-makers, it's important that you understand how their processes work so you can have your say. This section provides specific ways in which you can engage with government including presenting a submission to Parliament or select committee, petitioning Parliament, and contacting a politician.

The media is an important communication tool and one of the most effective ways of getting your message across to a lot of people. This section provides action guides on how to contact editors, tips for media interviews, and how to write a media release.

Making it Happen

Are you passionate about something and want to create change? Here are some tips that will help you get started and identify what you want to achieve.

Decide on your focus

"I feel really passionately about Aotearoa New Zealand having more access to affordable food and want to do something to help."

Be inspired

What inspires you? Identify your vision and ask yourself what you want to achieve, why it's important and who it affects.

Here are a few questions to ask to help you identify what you want to do:

- What's important to you? What issues motivate you to act?
- What would you like to change?
- What things are stopping you from doing something about these issues? How will you overcome or deal with these?

Get informed

Once you've decided on a topic or issue you want to take action on, it's important that you get clued up on your issue and know what you're talking about.

Research

You need to research your topic or issue to make sure you can find relevant information that will help you become more informed. By doing your own research, you can make a bigger impact on the changes you want to make. Consider these questions:

- What do you already know about this topic or issue, and what's your current view?
- What do you need to know about it, and what are the gaps in your knowledge?
- Who is affected by this topic/issue and why?
- What are people's views who support this topic/issue?
- What are people's views who don't support this topic/issue?
- What activities/actions have worked in the past around this topic/issue?
- Are any events/activities happening at the moment around this topic/issue?

You can research information about your topic/issue by using the following methods:

- Searching the internet – social media, blogs, media (including local and national sites), and academic journals will have up-to-date information.
- Talking to people – gather the views of people in your area and community (young people, whānau, organisations, contacts on social media, teachers, or neighbours).
- Asking the experts – reach out to someone who knows a bit about your topic/issue to get a head-start and some guidance.
- Going to a meeting – find out if there are community groups or organisations that are related to your cause.
- Visiting the library – some have local newspapers from across Aotearoa New Zealand, and this could give you an idea of what people's views are from different regional areas.
- Contacting government departments about reports and statistics – either online or in hard copy – these reports can give you important facts and figures.

Resources

Ask yourself these questions:

- What resources do I have?
- What do I already know?
- What resources do I need?
- How will I get these resources?

Resources can include:

- internet, phone, and a computer
- subscriptions to online tools like Zoom/Teams (video meetings) or Mural (online whiteboard)
- stationery
- other people with experience you may need (topic knowledge, media skills)
- other young people
- a meeting place.

If you need money to fund your project, you could apply for funding through the following channels:

- **Community Trusts** – there are a range of community trusts in each region with funding available for local projects. Just search your region name along with the words 'community trust'.
- **Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) – Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi (myd.govt.nz/funding)** provides information about youth enterprise funding available for young people.
- **Local councils** – contact your local council or check out their website to find out if they have specific funding for projects for young people.
- **Local funders** – find out where other groups in your community get their funding from. Ask youth workers and people working with young people if they know of any local funders which might support your project.

Build support for your issue

Talking to people and building contacts is the best way to judge if you're onto something that's a hot issue and important to the community.

If you and your group are going to be successful, you need to know how to deal with it when others don't agree with you or try to stop your opinion being heard.

Throughout your project, you may work with a range of people. To build relationships, it's important to:

- know about your topic/issue so people can see that you know what you're talking about (this is why research is important)
- have a key message that you can keep using
- keep focused on what it is you want to achieve.

In your community, ask people what they think:

- Do they think it's relevant, important, and beneficial to the community?
- What do they think needs to be done?
- Who can they recommend to help you or give some advice?

Networking

Networking is simply a way of talking to people you know (or people you want to know) about what you need. People in your network may be able to offer advice and information, provide opportunities, or introduce you to other people so you can grow your network.

Examples of network groups include your local community, online groups, church groups, and sports teams.

Recruiting people to get involved

Do you need to get other people on board? Here are key points to think about when recruiting people:

- What **roles** might people have if they get involved? Remember that everyone needs something to do.
- What **skills** will they need to take on those roles?
- What **resources** can be used to support people's involvement?
- What **information** will people need before they can get involved? What is the best way to give them this information?

Work together as a group

You can create change by yourself or by being part of a group. Having an effective team enables each member to use their skills and talents, share roles and responsibilities, communicate with each other, and get the job done.

Working as a team is a valuable skill for getting a project done and involves:

Sharing responsibilities

A project idea might take heaps of time for one person to do but would be more successful (and fun) if you all worked on it together. Sharing the work means you know who's working on what and you won't end up repeating something that someone else has already done.

Building relationships and trust

Everyone has different strengths and things they feel comfortable doing. You might be into leading a kōrero with a big group of people while someone else might enjoy writing. Find out what other people's strengths and interests are. Support each other on what you're working on.

Negotiating decision-making

Involving other people means listening to different opinions and ideas. As a group, you'll need to respect everyone's opinions and work together to make decisions.

Communicating effectively

Express yourself clearly and listen to what other people have to say. Remember, not everyone communicates the way you do, and it might take some people more time to warm up.

Work out your action

Brainstorming is a great way to think outside the box and come up with creative ideas on how you can achieve your project's goal and figure out what you want young people to learn about your topic/issue. If your group lives in different regional areas and it's too difficult to meet in person, you could use an online brainstorming tool like Mural.

Be realistic

Your brainstorming session might have led to heaps of ideas, but your project needs to be do-able. The following questions will help you make sure you can achieve what you want:

- Which idea will best achieve your project goal?
- Will you be working on this by yourself, or will you have others to share the workload?
- How much time can you spend on this project?
- Do you have the resources (cost, equipment) to do it, or can you find the resources needed e.g., apply for funding, or use someone else's equipment?
- Are there any barriers, issues, or risks in your idea? Is there anyone that you need to ask permission from before you start on your plan? What can you do to lessen the barriers, issues, or risks?

Be creative

Use your creative skills and don't be afraid to create something new. Be imaginative and think outside the box.

Think about what you want to achieve for yourself and your community. You could start by thinking of ways to create new opportunities or new resources.

Create an action plan

A great way to start organising an activity is to have a clear purpose and idea about how it might be achieved.

Make a plan – write down the steps you need to take to make your project happen. Making a plan is a great way to keep track of how your project is going.

Example

1	**Goal:**	To have better access to composting in our community.		
2	**Strategies:**	Strategies: Meet with the local youth council to raise the issue, and write an email to the Mayor outlining potential ways a compost collection service could be put in place.		
	Task	**Responsibility**	**Deadline**	**Resources**
3	**What are the steps that need to be taken?**	**Who is going to do this action?**	**When does this action need to be done by?**	**What do you need to get that task done?**
	Talk with the youth council coordinator to set a meeting with the youth council	Me	Within a week	Phone
	Write an email to the Mayor	Everyone	Within two months	Research compost collection service cost Help with writing emails

1 **Goal** – explains why you are taking the action and what outcome you hope to achieve. Goals should be clearly stated and realistic.

2 **Strategies** – specify how the goal will be met.

3 **Resources** – Ask yourself these questions:

- What resources do you have?
- What do you already know?
- What resources do you need?
- How will you get the resources?

Sample action plan

Goal:			
Strategies:			
Task	**Responsibility**	**Deadline**	**Resources**
What are the steps that need to be done?	**Who is going to do this action?**	**When does this action need to be done by?**	**What do you need to get that task done?**

Consulting with other young people

Finding out what other young people think is vital because they'll have different experiences, ideas, and opinions.

It's important to consult with other young people so you can best represent them in your community, school, or organisation. Consulting with young people can be really valuable to find out if they feel the same way you do about an issue or project.

What is consultation?

Consultation is a tool used to gather views from a range of people for a specific purpose. It helps to ensure a range of viewpoints can be heard and considered when decisions are being made.

Why should I engage with other young people?

It's important to consult with other young people about decisions because:

- sometimes what you think is not what other young people think
- other young people will have different experiences
- having a collection of voices and not just one opinion can provide more credibility
- different groups of young people have expertise and knowledge about different topics.

When consulting with young people about a specific topic or issue, gather the views and opinions from a range of young people who:

- could be most directly affected
- have the most direct experience.

One size does not fit everyone

Sometimes decision-makers forget that young people have different life experiences and backgrounds. They may ask you to comment on something before you've had a chance to consult with other young people about their thoughts and opinions. If this is the case, you can:

- let them know that you are responding from your own personal perspective
- ask them for the opportunity to consult with other young people so you can gather a range of young people's thoughts and opinions on the topic.

Put yourself in their shoes

Before you begin your consultation, it's important to consider what young people are thinking. Put yourself in their shoes and imagine what kinds of questions they might have for you:

- Who is this person and what group are they from?
    - Introduce yourself and explain what the role of your group is.
- Why do they want my opinion on this?
    - Let them know why you have specifically asked for their opinion, and why their opinion is important.
- Where will my thoughts and ideas go?
    - Let them know where their voice will go and how you will feedback decisions and outcomes from the consultation.

How do you consult with other young people?

If you need to find out what events young people in your community are interested in attending, ask them.

If you need to find out what young people think about your local park, ask them.

Example

A youth health advisory group surveyed young people online and in-person at their local health centre, asking them what they thought about the health services in their community.

Work out your plan

The following steps will help you work out your plan:

Step one: what	What do you need to know from young people?	Ideas on how council events funding should be used.
Step two: why	Why is it important for young people to have a say on this topic?	This is important because we've noticed a lot of council funding goes to events and projects that young people don't engage with or attend.
Step 3: who	Who are the young people affected by this issue, or know the most about the topic? Which young people's opinions do you need?	Young people living within the council boundaries. Young people not already engaged in or attending the community events/projects.
Step 4: how	How will you find out what these young people think about the topic?	Survey young people and ask questions about the sorts of community events they'd be interested in attending.
Step 5: where	Where do you need to do your consultation? Consider where people will be most comfortable, and what the unique needs of those involved in the engagement are (e.g., is the location accessible?). Where are the young people you need to consult with already? e.g. Where do they hang out?	Share a poll on social media and email around a survey link to students of local schools, sports groups, and church groups.

Step 6: when	When is the best time to consult with these young people?	After school hours.
Step 7: feedback	How will you feed back the youth opinions you gather to the decision-makers? How will you let young people know the outcome of sharing their voices?	Write a letter to the city councillors summarising the feedback from young people. Write a letter directly to the young people involved. If an event or project is planned as a result, write a media release, and distribute it to the local media.

Sample consultation plan

Step one: what	What do you need to know from young people?	
Step two: why	Why is it important for young people to have a say on this topic?	
Step 3: who	Who are the young people affected by this issue, or know the most about the topic? Which young people's opinions do you need?	
Step 4: how	How will you find out what these young people think about the topic?	
Step 5: where	Where do you need to do your consultation? Consider where people will be most comfortable, and what the unique needs of those involved in the engagement are (e.g., is the location accessible?). Where are the young people you need to consult with already (e.g., where do they hang out)?	
Step 6: when	When is the best time to consult with these young people?	
Step 7: feedback	How will you feed back the youth opinions you gather to the decision-makers? How will you let young people know the outcome of sharing their voices?	

Methods to use when consulting young people

You can find out what young people think on an issue or topic through a range of methods. Many of these can be done both in-person and online, depending on people's access to the internet and/or the engagement location. It's also a good idea to ask people what engagement types they prefer/what they need before you make a decision on which one/s to use:

- Hui/workshops
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Surveys
- Social media (polls, question call-outs, posts/stories, online groups)
- Online forums/blogs
- A combination of the above.

Let young people know how they can have their say

You need to make sure young people know how they can have their say. There are a variety of ways you can do this:

- Word of mouth
- Promoting the opportunity online through social media
- Contacting MYD **(mydinfo@myd.govt.nz)** if you want to promote the opportunity through youth development networks
- DMing the MYD social media accounts if you want to have the opportunity re-shared
- School notices
- Talking to local youth groups and church groups
- Posters/flyers
- Talking to students at your school assembly.

You've consulted with other young people – now what?

When you've consulted and gathered young people's views, you'll need to collate all the information and summarise what people have said. You can do this by:

- creating a PowerPoint presentation or carousel post for social media including the main messages
- writing a report
- producing a film/video (don't forget to get permission).

Let young people know the outcome

Keeping young people updated on what's happening throughout the process and letting them know the decisions made is important.

Let them know:

- how you presented the information to decision-makers
- what the decision-makers did with the information
- what decisions were made.

You can update young people through:

- Email
- Social media
- Newsletters e.g., school, council, youth group
- Meetings and/or presentations.

Using social media to share your voice

Social media has become an increasingly useful tool for young people to share their voice, engage with a wide group of people, and to find out about what's going on in their community.

This guide was created based on the thoughts, opinions, and advice of the MYD Youth Advisory Group 2022-2023.

Know your platform

> "Make sure you are preaching to the right audience. Social media is a behemoth with so many users so your voice can easily be drowned out." MYD Youth Advisory Group member

There's a wide variety of platform choices to consider, and new ones are coming out all the time. If you have a target audience, consider the best place to find them, and which platform/s will be the most effective for what you're trying to achieve:

Platform name	Description
Instagram	Instagram is a photo and video sharing app with a news feed of content made by the people you follow. Less formal than Facebook and LinkedIn, but more formal than TikTok, Instagram is good for: • its flexibility – it has a wide range of posting options, including images, videos, reels, stories, and notes (although, it has recently become increasingly video-orientated, so your post reach would be improved through using videos/reels) • having a combination of features found on other social media platforms (e.g., private messaging, live streaming) • being up to date – originally named as a portmanteau of 'instant camera', posts tend to focus on what's going on in the here and now • reaching a wide variety of people, organisations, and businesses • targeting youth adjacent people (24 years-plus) • discovering opportunities and new information.

TikTok	TikTok is an app for creating, sharing, and discovering short videos. The app allows users to produce informal clips quickly and is fast-moving in terms of trends. It's good for: • its reach – 67% of young people internationally use TikTok[1], making it the second most used platform after YouTube • expressing yourself creatively – it's often used to share ideas or thoughts through singing, dancing, comedy, and lip-syncing • being relevant – although it can be a bit of a minefield • engagement – you can gain a large following and audience • advocacy/raising awareness.
Facebook	Although Facebook isn't used by young people as much anymore, it's still used for creating private/public events, having open or closed groups, and receiving community updates. It's also useful for connecting with adult audiences and keeping in touch with friends and whānau.
LinkedIn	LinkedIn is a more formal platform often described as the Facebook of the professional world. Mainly used by people entering or already in the workforce, it's a good way to profile your achievements, campaign to professionals, and share blog posts. Young leaders and advocates also use LinkedIn to connect with decision-makers and reach a wider audience.
X (formerly known as Twitter)	X (formerly known as Twitter) is a platform where users broadcast short posts known as tweets. Although it's not used by as many young people as other platforms, it can be good for activism, sharing opinions, and getting the attention of public figures and news outlets. Just @mention them in your tweet or comment.
Discord	Discord is a communications app that lets you share voice, video, and text chat with friends and communities. It's good for: • chatting online • organising groups • building a community which has a big collective voice • being easy to regulate.
Threads	Threads is an online social media and social networking service. The app offers the ability to post and share text, images, and videos, as well as interact with other users' posts through replies, reposts, and likes. Closely linked to Instagram, the functionality of Threads is similar to X (formerly known as Twitter).

1 https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/08/10/teens-social-media-and-technology-2022/

Who to follow

It's a good idea to think about who you want to follow – social media can be a useful way of keeping up to date on what's going on. Not to mention many government agencies, organisations, and individuals promote engagement opportunities on their social platforms. Consider searching for:

- journalists you like
- news outlets you like
- accounts you feel empowered by
- experts in the field/sectors you're interested in
- members of Parliament (MPs) and political parties
- other young people
- people that are passionate about the same things you are
- local community accounts
- activists and influencers that have a stake in your area/s of interest
- government accounts or accounts that have strong relationships with government organisations or officials
- charities and NGOs.

Accounts recommended by the MYD Youth Advisory Group:

@ministryyouthdevelopment
@re.news
@thehive.nz
@arataiohi
@nzparliament
@ministryofeducation
@insideoutkoaro
@rainbowyouth
@impact
@ywcaaotearoanz
@unyouthnz
@studentsnz
@genzeronz
@roctrust
@shamaethnicwomentrust

Sharing your voice

> "Share what you care about and what you're passionate about. Don't feel like you have to share something you don't believe in because others are. Be open to hearing other people's beliefs and ideas and be respectful of them, even if they're different from your own." MYD Youth Advisory Group member

There are lots of different ways to approach sharing your voice. Some advice from the MYD Youth Advisory Group includes:

- Have a specific goal and a targeted message (keep it concise – what are you trying to achieve and how are you going to communicate that information?).
- Think about how to make it engaging for your audience so it doesn't get lost in the void of information – what could you do to make it visually captivating?
- Use the form that appeals to you. For example, if you love creative writing, use that skill. Don't feel like you need to do what others are doing.
- Reshare existing content – you don't always need to make your own. Resharing a post, story, status, or tweet can be a great way of showing your support or interest in a cause.
- Use social media to start conversations and ask questions. Making these connections can help develop ideas and also amplify your message.
- Seek out existing groups or accounts that are focused on your specific interests that you could connect with. If there isn't a group, consider whether you'd like to make one yourself.
- Fact-check your information and only use research from trusted sources.
- Be genuine – you don't need to post or share something because you feel like you should.
- Be willing to critically reflect and admit to being wrong about something, but be unapologetic about what you believe in.
- Use social media as a communication tool for planning 'for youth, by youth' engagements.

Take care

> "Know your emotion at the time of posting, are you angry, sad, distressed? Walk away for 10 to 20 minutes and re-read what you've drafted. It'll give you better insight."
>
> MYD Youth Advisory Group member

Social media can feel like the Wild West sometimes. It's important that you take precautions and look after yourself and others when thinking about sharing your voice online:

- Consider who might see it – would you prefer to have a private or public account? Imagine a world where what you've shared gets a lot bigger than anticipated – do you still want to do it? Would you be okay if the post's digital footprint still exists in the future?
- Make sure your wording is clear to avoid its meaning being taken out of context.
- Be kind and respectful – ensure what you're saying or sharing won't harm anyone, and give others the full autonomy to choose not to share their voice.
- Don't feel like you need to use social media if it's not within your comfort zone – it can be a challenging and complicated place, and there are many other ways to share your voice.

- Be cautious. Don't share personal information with people you don't trust (full name, address, phone number) and block accounts that make you feel unsafe.
- Use your critical reflection skills and do your own research! Not everything you see or read online is fact-checked.
- Keep fighting for your passion and don't be afraid – whether it's online or offline.

Take it to the next level

> "Me āta whakaaro kaua e tuku noa – think carefully and don't give up." MYD Youth Advisory Group member

Sharing your voice on social media shouldn't stop you from also sharing it in person! Think of social media as just one of the many tools in your kete for sharing your voice, and a useful way to connect with others and learn about in-person engagements happening in your community. Actively seek out other engagement opportunities, and continue to kōrero with friends, whānau, and others offline.

Running meetings

Meetings are a useful way for a group to come together and make decisions about how to get a task done. They can be formal or casual and tailored to suit the needs of the group.

The first time a group meets, you may need to set the scene, get to know each other, and work out a few things.

> "If you are meeting with rangatahi Māori, meet at a marae or purpose-built whare. If you are meeting with the LGBTQIA+ community, include mihi whakatau that clarifies safety by asking pronouns and set a kaupapa of respect." MYD Youth Advisory Group member

Key factors that help to make meetings run successfully are:

Time and place – schedule meetings at times that everyone can attend, and in places that are easily accessible and comfortable for all attendees.

Agenda – create a list of things that need to be talked about in the meeting. Everyone should have the opportunity to add things to an agenda. It's a good idea to have standing agenda items that you want to talk about at every meeting e.g., "What has happened since the last meeting?"

Chairperson/Facilitator – the chairperson's job is to run the meetings and make sure everyone has a chance to speak. They also make sure everything on the agenda is discussed and decisions are made. You can share the chairperson's job around the group so everyone can have a chance to chair a meeting.

Some things for the chairperson to think about:

- Ask the group questions to begin the discussion.
- Give everyone a fair chance to have their say, but don't let the meeting drag on.
- Make sure everyone sticks to the point.
- Allow for different views – it's good to hear a range of opinions.
- Everyone in the group does not need to agree.

Note taker – choose someone to record key points, decisions that were made, and a list of action points (you don't need to record everything).

Example of an agenda:

Agenda items

1. **Present:** Who's at the meeting?
2. **Apologies:** Who couldn't make the meeting?
3. **Project update:** What's going well? What issues need to be addressed?
4. **Project work:** What are you planning to do next? How will it be done? Who is responsible for each action?

Here's an example of questions you may want to include in your meeting:

What are the things the group is working on now?

- e.g., Emailing an MP about a local pollution issue.

Where is the group at with this project?

- e.g., Researching who the best MP is to contact.

Where to from here?

- e.g., As there's value in both the Minister for the Environment and local Electorate MP being aware of the issue, we're going to write two separate tailored emails – one focusing on the local environment for the electorate, the other on pollution as a whole in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Action points (who is doing what and when)?

- e.g., Nikau is going to write the draft email to the Electorate MP. Cora is going to write the email for the Minister for the Environment. Jamie is going to proofread it and Olive is going to email it to the right addresses, then also send it to the MPs via direct message across all of their social media accounts.

Influencing Decision-Makers

Cental Government Decision-Makers

Every day, we are all affected by decisions the government makes; from going to school, driving at a speed limit, and having a day off for Te Rā Aro ki a Matariki – Matariki Observance Day. It's important to understand how Parliament and Government processes work, so you can have your say in political decision-making.

The Parliamentary System in Aotearoa New Zealand

The New Zealand Parliamentary system follows the Westminster system (a parliamentary system of government modelled after the politics of the United Kingdom).

It has three branches designed to ensure that no part of the system has ultimate power and that there are checks and balances on each.

The Legislature is the House of Representatives with all the MPs, including Select Committees. The Legislature makes laws.

The Executive is the Government and is made up of Ministers who are responsible for running the country. The Executive (the Government) administers laws.

The Judiciary are Judges and the Courts who apply the law through hearing and deciding cases and reviewing decisions of government.

The system also includes the Sovereign, the King, who is represented by the Governor-General.

The House of Representatives

When you hear on TV that something happened in 'Parliament', they mean the House of Representatives. All the MPs from around Aotearoa New Zealand come together in 'the House' and make decisions that affect all of our lives.

The House's role is to:

- provide the Government (Executive) from amongst its members
- make new laws and update old laws
- represent the people
- examine and approve Government taxes and spending
- hold the Government to account for its policies and actions.

Members of Parliament

There are usually about 120 MPs in the House and most MPs belong to a political party. MPs are either electorate or list MPs.

New Zealanders 18 years and over get to vote for who will represent them in the House. Under New Zealand's voting system, voters have two votes; a party vote and an electorate vote.

Electorate MPs: The electorate vote helps decide who will become your electorate MP. The candidate who gets the most votes in an area wins the seat and becomes the electorate MP for that area.

List MPs: A list MP is someone who has been elected from a political party's 'party list'. The party vote helps decide how many seats in Parliament each party will get.

You can find information about all of the current MPs at **parliament.nz.**

Select Committees

Select Committees are groups of MPs that undertake work in certain areas for the House of Representatives. There are currently 12 'subject' select committees , which focus on one or two big national topics like health or justice. Each one consists of between six and 12 MPs from different parties in Parliament.

Through these committees, Parliament can get the opinions and advice of the general public, experts, and organisations when making law. There are also eight specialist select committees which deal with other business of Parliament.

The Government

Who gets to be the Government?
Through our democratic system, Aotearoa New Zealand citizens aged 18 and older get to decide who will become the Government by electing MPs to the House of Representatives in the general election.

The Government in Aotearoa New Zealand is formed by either a party or a group of parties that has the support of the majority of the House of Representatives.

Who's who in the Government?

The Prime Minister and Cabinet
The Prime Minister is usually the leader of the party with the most seats in Parliament and they are the head of Cabinet.

Cabinet is the central decision-making group of the executive government which is separate to Parliament. A group of Ministers join the Prime Minister to make up the people in Cabinet.

You can find more information about what Cabinet does on the website of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet: **dpmc.govt.nz**.

Ministers

Ministers are given responsibility to look after particular areas (called Ministerial portfolios) e.g., Minister for Youth or the Minister of Education.

You will be surprised at how many Ministers there are (we usually only hear about the large Ministerial portfolios). You can find all the portfolios and information about Ministers at **beehive.govt.nz.**

How laws are made by Parliament

Laws (or Acts) are first proposed to the House of Representatives as Bills. They have to go through a process of approval by the House and Governor-General before becoming Acts.

The majority of Bills are proposed by the Government of the day. Individual MPs can also promote their own Bills, called member's Bills. Local government individuals and organisations, with the support of an MP, may also bring forward legislation that only affects them.

The life of a Bill

Bills get debated three times in Parliament.

After the first debate, Parliament votes on whether the Bill should be examined further or be dropped. If the Bill gets the vote to go ahead, it's usually sent to a select committee which examines it in more detail. This is also where the people of Aotearoa New Zealand get the chance to have their say. The select committee process is an important part of Parliament's work.

When considering a Bill, select committees often invite the public to make comments or submissions on the Bill so that the committee members can take into account what the public, experts, and organisations think about the Bill and how it might be improved. In the past, select committees have suggested Bills be completely rewritten and on occasion scrapped altogether.

After it has examined the Bill and heard any submissions, the select committee creates a report of its recommendations on the Bill for the House.

The Bill then goes to its second reading in the House where it's debated, and MPs may suggest changes to it. If the vote is lost, that is the end of the Bill. Otherwise, the Bill is ready for debate by a committee of the whole House. Any MP can be a part of the committee of the whole House and can make short speeches, debate the Bill, and propose changes. Large or controversial Bills may be before a committee of the whole House for several days.

Once the final form of a Bill is agreed, it is ready for the final third reading. This is the final stage before the Bill becomes law and MPs vote on it for the last time. If more MPs vote for the Bill than against it, the Bill is passed. The Governor-General signs it and the Bill becomes an Act of Parliament and a law which governs Aotearoa New Zealand.

Local Government (Council) decision-makers

As well as electing people to represent us in central government, we also elect people to represent us in local government.

What's local government got to do with me?

Local governments provide many of the facilities you use every day. If you turned on a tap, used the internet at the library, or biked down a road, then you've used something provided by your local government.

Local government is made up of territorial authorities (district and city councils) and regional councils. Councils contribute to the good governance of their communities and make decisions and set directions for promoting the social, cultural, environmental, and economic wellbeing of them.

District and city councils provide:

- environmental health and safety (including environmental health, building control, and civil defence)
- local infrastructure (e.g., roading and transport, sewerage, water)
- recreation and culture
- resource management (including how land can be used and where buildings can go up)
- community wellbeing and development.

Many city and district councils also have youth councils.

Regional councils cover much bigger areas than city and district councils. They work on:

- resource management (water quality, soil, coastal planning)
- control of plant and animal pests (like possums)
- river management and controlling floods and erosion
- land transport planning and organising public transport (like bus services)
- civil defence (natural disasters, marine oil spills).

Some regional councils also have environmental youth councils.

Councils put their policies and plans out for communities to discuss and give feedback on. The two important plans a council creates for its community are:

- **The Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP)** outlines the council's goals for the next ten years and is reviewed every three years.
- **The Annual Plan** is a yearly document that sets out the activities that the council intends to undertake in the next 12 months and how much it will cost.

How can you get your thoughts to council?

You may have seen a post or advertisement online about your local council wanting public input on an issue or project.

If you have opinions about certain topics or issues, it's important to let your local government decision-makers know. For example:

> "I think we should have bike lanes on the road by the local marae."

> "I don't support the proposed funding cuts for the arts."

> "I think we need better lighting in the bus tunnel at night."

If you want to have input into decisions about issues like these in your community, you need to talk to either your city, district, or regional council depending on the issue.

There are several ways you can participate in council decision-making process. They include:

- making submissions
- doing a petition
- speaking at a council meeting
- making submissions to the council's Annual Plan or LTCCP.

Councils have different processes and ways the community can get their views to council. Check with your city, district, and regional council for more information about how you can have your say.

Making a submission

Submissions can cover a wide range of things from how to reimagine the local arts centre model through to dealing with inner-city pollution.

A submission is the presentation of your (or your group's) views or opinions about a matter currently under consideration by your local council.

You have the choice of making an oral or written submission. Whichever option you choose, make sure you:

- plan your submission – consider what you want to achieve
- include your key points
- tell the council what you want – don't leave them to guess
- use clear, simple, everyday language.

There is usually a draft document you can read to get relevant information to help you make your submission.

Get your submission to the council before the closing date and time.

Make sure you state in your submission if you want to speak at a hearing. Speaking at a hearing can help to highlight what you said in your submission, but your submission is just as valid if you don't speak.

What not to do in your submission

Make sure that your submission does not:

- include any personal feelings you have about the council or its officers
- refer to issues or effects that are not related to the proposed plan or plan change.

How do I find out about council submissions?

Your council's website will probably list the submissions it currently has open. It's also a good idea to follow your council on social media (if you use it), as it'll often promote when an engagement opens as well as reminders about its closing date.

If your council or area has a youth council, you could also contact it for information on what submissions directly affect young people in your community.

Do a petition

If there's an issue you feel strongly about and want the council to change, a petition is an effective way for a number of people to express their opinions on an issue. It's also a good way to put a topic or issue on the council's radar if it's not already aware of it.

Important things to remember when doing a petition:

- Provide brief information about your petition and the reasons why people should sign it. For example, what would be the benefits for your community if your petition was successful?
- Be really clear about the reason for your petition and what you want the council to do.
- Make sure as many people are aware of the petition as possible. Share it on social media, post it in school/club notices, and chat with your friends and whānau.
- A petition needs to be received by someone with the power to do something about the issue, and who is preferably sympathetic to the issue. Identify who the petition needs to be sent to and contact that person to make sure they'll receive it for you.
- Present the petition to the Council yourself or ask a councillor to present on your behalf.

Speak at public meetings

Speaking at the various types of council meetings is one way for you to have your say on community issues to the mayor and councillors. The types of council meetings include:

- public meetings
- council committee meetings.

Some councils also have community boards that you can speak to. Community boards can also choose to take your issue to the council on your behalf.

Be prepared – councils follow formal meeting procedures so make sure you find out the process of the meeting and any rules you need to know e.g., when you're allowed to speak and for how long, and whether you will be asked any questions.

Be respectful, clear, and stick to the point.

For more information about local government view the Local Government New Zealand website: **lgnz.co.nz**.

Petition Parliament

If you feel really strongly about an issue and think the government needs to act on it – one option is to petition Parliament.

You've probably seen heaps of general petitions around. Examples might include:

- petitions shared on social media or by email
- local stores with petitions on their counters
- someone on a footpath collecting signatures for a campaign.

What is a petition to Parliament?

A petition to Parliament is a request (signed by at least one person, but usually many people) that may try to:

- get the Government to change a law so that it works better
- ask the Government to change the way it's dealing with a national topic/issue
- ask for more examination and thought about an issue (i.e., call for an inquiry).

Anyone of any age can petition the House of Representatives.

Office of the Ombudsman

Before you start a petition, contact the Office of the Ombudsman.

The Office of the Ombudsman can investigate and review decisions, recommendations or acts relating to Government departments, related organisations, and local authorities.

A petition cannot be accepted if you have not exhausted your legal remedies and the matter should be dealt with by the courts or a tribunal.

For more information, visit the website: **ombudsman.govt.nz.**

What can I petition Parliament about?

You need to make sure you've done everything else possible to get your message to Parliament and the decision-makers before you launch into doing it.

Doing a petition is a big thing. Ask yourself, is this an issue that:

- I strongly believe the government needs to do something about?
- I know that other people also feel strongly about?

Remember:

- The more people who sign the petition, the more powerful it is.

How do I write the petition?

Parliament is really strict about the way petitions are set out; otherwise, it will get sent back to you.

1. Contact the Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives to ensure no petition with a similar request has already been considered during the current term of Parliament. (Phone: 04 817 8080, email: **petitions@parliament.govt.nz**).

2. Go to **petitions.parliament.nz/create** to begin your petition. Read the Acceptance of House Rules carefully.

3. Make sure you enter the contact details for the petition with the name, email address, and phone number of the "Principal Petitioner". This is the person who started or organised the petition.

4. Write your petition in te reo Māori or English. Use respectful language and keep your request simple and clear.

5. Explain the action you want Parliament to do. Don't include irrelevant statements.

6. Sign the cover sheet and verify your email address. This will be used for any correspondence related to the petition.

7. Collect signatures:
    - **Electronic petitions** will be hosted on the Parliament website, which means it can receive support from anyone who agrees with it. It will remain open until the closing date you've chosen, and you can promote it as widely as you like. People will need to enter their name and email address when they sign the petition.
    - **For paper-based petitions,** people will need to write their full name, along with their signature. Ensure each signature sheet is addressed to the House of Representatives by writing or typing the words 'To the House of Representatives' on the top of each signature sheet. Under that line, include the full text of your petition request on every page and the reason for the petition (if there is one). This is so that people know what they are signing. Remember to include space for people to write their name and sign.

8. Your petition needs to be presented to Parliament by an MP. The easiest way to do this is to ask your local MP. If you have created an electronic petition, you must find an MP to present it within six months of it closing for signatures. An MP presents a petition by delivering it to the Clerk of the House.
9. Presenting a petition does not mean an MP agrees with its intent. The MP presenting the petition must sign the cover sheet.

Check out the 'Present a submission to a select committee or Parliament' guide for more information.

What happens next?

When petitions are delivered by MPs to the Clerk of the House, they are checked. If your petition complies with the rules of the House, it is presented. If your petition does not comply, it will be returned to the MP.

When a petition is presented, it is allocated to the appropriate select committee and announced in the House.

The select committee can choose how to deal with a petition. It might decide to get more information (a submission) from you. You may be asked to provide information regarding the specific nature of the petition. Your submission should be in writing. A committee may also request submissions from Government departments and other interested parties.

Select committees may also hear oral evidence.

A select committee has a variety of options available when reporting on a petition to the House. These include:

- a report with recommendations
- a report with no recommendations at all
- if a petition was considered with another item of business, the select committee may acknowledge that and include the petition in its report on that item.

Sometimes the select committee says that nothing more should be done with the petition and its request. That doesn't mean your petition was a waste of time. Petitions are about getting important messages heard – you have achieved that.

The clerk of the select committee will notify you of the outcome of a select committee's decision once the report on your petition is made to the House.

If the select committee recommends actions, this then goes to the Government.
The Government then has 90 days to decide what it will do about select committee recommendations. The final government report is printed and available on the parliamentary website.

For more information about Parliament and Government, go to **parliament.nz**.

Present a submission to a select committee or Parliament

Whether you are 14 or 40 years old, a student or a doctor, all public submissions are given the same respect and value. You don't have to have any special knowledge (and you can be any age) to write a submission. All you need is an interest in what the Bill or inquiry is about.

If a decision is different from what you wanted, it doesn't mean you weren't heard. Remember, a number of people may have written a submission that held a different viewpoint from yours.

To find out what Bills are asking for public submissions, go to **parliament.nz** and search for 'Bills before select committees'.

Generally, submissions to select committees become public, which means that anyone can see what you (or your group) have said.

Why write a submission?

Heaps of individuals, groups of people, and organisations write submissions on Bills. Organisations from University Students' Associations to the Automobile Association write submissions on Bills they have an interest in.

People write submissions because they either like or don't like a Bill. If they like the Bill, they write to let the select committee know why they support the Bill becoming a law.

If they dislike the Bill, they write to object against the Bill becoming law and explain why they think it's a bad idea. Some people also ask to present their submission in person and speak directly to the select committee.

Getting active on a submission

Think about getting together with other young people on a Bill you all feel strongly about and writing a group submission. If you're part of a youth group, the group could write a submission together.

Encourage other young people to make submissions and share information on social media. Its important young people submit their views on Bills that affect them.

Learn about the Bill

You don't need to actually read the entire Bill, but make sure you know what's in it.

You can find out more information about the Bill at **parliament.nz**. There you will find a short blurb about the Bill, the date submissions are due, and where you need to send your submission.

You could also search for information on the Bill online. There are often resources or websites available on particular Bills that provide translations and prompts so that you can find out what the Bill might mean for you.

You may also find links to a 'Bill digest' on that particular Bill. A Bill digest is a guide written to assist MPs when they consider a Bill. These are simple to understand and give you a good overview of the Bill.

You can also read the Hansard, which is a written archive of the debate in parliament about the Bill. This will give you information about why the Bill is happening and what MPs in Parliament think about it. There will be opinions for and against the Bill in the Hansard.

If you are really keen, you can download the whole Bill for free from **legislation.govt.nz**.

Research to develop your key message

Some different ways to research Bills include:

- **Web search:** Do a website search on the Bill and you'll find a bunch of different opinions to help you develop your own opinion. Who do you agree with/disagree with? Why?
- **Talk to other people:** Your whānau, next door neighbour, followers on social media, your friends – basically anyone interested in the issue. As you talk with others, you'll become clear about your thoughts on the topic.
- **Media research:** If the Bill is a hot topic in Aotearoa New Zealand, it will get lots of attention in the media e.g., media articles, letters to the editor, and social media. Read these and use them to update your views on the topic. If you disagree with the points of view, what would your argument be? This may be the beginning of your submission.

Writing your submission

An effective and powerful submission is a simple one that explains your own or the group's views on the subject.

- Start with your key message about why you support or oppose the Bill, or parts of it. (You can write a submission on a small part of a Bill; you don't need to have views on all of it).
- Use the rest of your submission to back up your key messages.
- Use bullet points rather than long sentences.
- Type it up or write it neatly.
- Include your name and address.

The trick to a good submission is being able to say **why** you think the way you do. What are the reasons you are for or against a Bill becoming law?

Submissions to Parliament are normally received online at **parliament.nz.** Written submissions can also be made, and all submissions can be reinforced through an oral presentation to the select committee.

Get a proofreader

Run your submission through an online spell-checker and/or get someone to proofread your submission before you send it off. Here are some questions a proofreader can use as a guide:

- Is the key message clear?
- What needs more explanation?
- Is there any repetition?
- Does it make sense?
- Does it keep to the subject?

Submit it before the deadline

Submit your submission before the closing date. Find more information on how to make a submission at **parliament.nz/en/how-to-make-a-submission.**

Contacting Politicians

Have you got something that you want to tell an MP? The Government can only do a good job if it hears from the people it serves.

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

Check out these great reasons for why you should get your voice heard by politicians:

- It's really important for politicians to understand issues from many different perspectives, including young people's points of view.
- Lots of politicians want to hear from young people. Especially Ministers who have a lot to do with young people like the Minister for Youth or the Minister of Education.
- Contacting politicians works. Heaps of government decisions are influenced by messages, emails, and letters.

You could write a message or email by yourself or organise a campaign on a particular issue and get lots of young people writing in with the same message.

Who should I write to?

The first thing you need to work out is what kind of MP you need to write to:

- Electorate MPs
- List MPs
- Ministers
- The Prime Minister.

If you have a concern about a national issue that fits under a Minister's portfolio, you should write to them. Ministers expect to hear from groups of people who are trying to get change on a particular issue that they're responsible for. For example, if you want to let the Government know what you think about climate change initiatives, you could write to the Minister of Climate Change. If you are concerned about proposed education reforms, you could write to the Minister of Education.

What Ministers hear through messages, letters, and emails from people is really important in helping them make decisions that affect us all.

How can I contact them?

It's easy to find out who your local electorate MP is. To find your electorate MP's name and contact details, go to **parliament.nz** and click on 'MPs and Electorates'. Here you can find all the electorate and list MPs from around the country.

You can find out who the Ministers are, what their portfolios are, and their email addresses by going to **beehive.govt.nz.** If you have access to the internet, an option is to email or message the MP through their social media.

Another option is physical post. You can write to any MP, Minister, or the Prime Minister for FREE (no stamps needed in Aotearoa New Zealand).

You must include their full name and the address below:

[insert MP's full name]

Freepost ParliamentPrivate Bag 18 888

Parliament Buildings

Wellington 6160

If you want to send a letter to all members of Parliament, send 121 copies of your letter in one envelope. Include a covering note asking for a copy to be distributed to each MP.

Then, address it to:

All members of Parliament

Care of Distribution Services

Freepost Parliament

Private Bag 18 888

Parliament Buildings

Wellington 6160

Will they write back to me?

Most MPs respond to messages, emails, and letters from people in their community. Their response will probably talk about their party's ideas, government policies, and their own ideas on the topic/issue you have written about.

Ministers get help from their staff and from the Ministries they are responsible for to respond to queries.

What should I write?

Here are some important things to help you get your message across:

- Explain why a particular topic/issue is important to you and your community/young people or New Zealanders as a whole.
- Don't think that the politician will already know everything. Remember you may be educating them on a youth perspective or about something they don't know about.
- Be clear and to the point.
- Be constructive. What do you think should happen to solve the issue you are raising? What are you asking the politician to do?
- Include your values and opinions on the issue, and back up your argument with facts where needed.
- Make sure that you include your contact details, so that they can respond to you.

For more information about how Parliament works check out the 'Central Government Decision-Makers' guide.

Working with the Media

Contacting the Editor

If you or your group feel strongly about an issue and want to have your say, there are many ways in which you can express your opinion.

Writing an email or a letter to the editor is one way in which you can bring attention to an issue. It can be part of a list of tools you use to express your opinions along with other tools such as posting on social media, doing a media interview, or writing a media release.

What makes a good email or letter?

A good email or letter is usually no more than 200 words and is addressed to the 'Editor' of a website, newspaper, or magazine. It should be about an issue that's current in the news or something that people are talking about.

Almost every website, newspaper, or magazine has a section where people can write and share their views.

While there are no guarantees, an email or letter that is well-written, current, and interesting is more likely to get published. Letters that are too long or hard to read may not be published or may be shortened to fit in the space allowed. Make sure that you keep to the point.

Where do I start?

If you're not sure how to begin, look at the letters to the editor section in your local website, newspaper, or magazine. This can help you get ideas and will usually provide their rules for accepting letters. Have a look at their published articles; what are they saying about the issue?

Think about the following questions:

- What topics/issues are the articles talking about?
- Are there lots of articles on the topic/issue?
- What are people saying about this topic/issue?
- What is your opinion about the topic/issue – do you have a different view to what others are saying?

Being a young person, you already offer a different view because most articles will be written by adults.

If there's an article or a letter written by someone that you disagree with, then start writing. It's always best to write your email or letter as soon as possible and send it in while the issue is still fresh in everyone's minds.

Plan your email or letter to the editor

Check out the letters to the editor section on the website, or in the newspaper or magazine. Think about:

1. How are these letters written?
2. What topics/issues are they talking about?
3. Do I agree/disagree/feel strongly about any of these topics/issues?

This will help you get an idea of the kind of letters that are being published and what topics/issues are current.

When you're clear about the topic/issue you want to focus on, go through your local website, newspaper, or magazine and read all the articles you can find on it to give background for your letter.

Remember to take note of the name of the website, newspaper, or magazine you found the articles in and the date they were printed.

Writing your email/letter

If you want to start some discussion on a particular topic, or respond to a letter or article on the website, or in the newspaper or magazine, mention what article you are responding to and the date it was published so that readers and the editor know what you're writing about.

If you're writing about a letter someone else has written, mention the date it was printed, the topic/issue it talked about, and the name of the person who wrote it.

- Focus on one main point and keep to the facts.
- Keep it brief. Write short paragraphs with no more than three sentences per paragraph. A good rule is one idea per sentence.
- Write your name and contact details at the bottom of your letter. They won't print your contact information, but this is needed in case they need to follow up with you.
- It's always good to have someone else check your spelling and grammar. It's amazing what a fresh pair of eyes can pick up.

Example

Dear Editor,

I was interested to read your article on 10 May "Young people, social media and mental health". As someone that spends a lot of time on social media, I agree that it can often leave me feeling anxious or like I've wasted part of my day.

However, I felt some of your statements, such as "young people have lost the ability to engage in real life" sensationalised the topic and left little room for autonomy. Us young people still have plenty going on in real life, and the free will to step away from screens.

Instead of pigeon-holing young people as screen addicts, I think it could have been more constructive for you to consider how we as a society could create more screen-free environments.

Jo Bloggs

jobloggs@email.com (remember they won't print your email address, it's just so they know how to contact you for more information)

123 Alphabet St (remember they won't print your street address, just your town)

Town/city

Checklist before sending it

Before emailing or sending your letter, check one more time that you have:

- read it through and checked the spelling and grammar
- run it through an online grammar-checker and/or given it to someone else to proofread
- kept it short – under 200 words
- included your name and contact details
- covered your main points.

Sending off your letter

You can email or post your letter and address it to the editor.

Websites, newspapers, and magazines usually put all their contact details in the same place/page of every issue.

Check the website, newspaper, or magazine to see if your letter is published. If it still hasn't been published after two weeks, contact the editorial department to see what happened.

Even if your letter doesn't get published, don't give up. If there are other topics/issues you feel strongly about, then keep writing.

Media Release

A great way of getting free publicity about your project and letting other people know what you're doing is to send out a media release. A media release is a short (usually no more than one page) write-up about an event, project, or issue that you send to the news media.

A media release can also be called a "press release" or a "news release".

How does a media release work?

Sending a media release to the news media is a good way of getting their attention and letting them know that something's coming up. A lot of what you see in the news starts from or is based on a media release.

When should I send a media release?

It's no good sending out your media release about an upcoming event the day before it happens and expecting journalists to turn up. Give journalists at least a week's notice – especially if you're having an event or launching a project.

However, if you're doing a media release about an important issue currently in the news then send it out as soon as possible.

What should be in the media release?

Sending out a media release doesn't mean it will automatically go online, in the newspaper, or on TV or the radio. There are ways to improve your chances of getting your media release in the news.

Make sure your media release is well-written and engaging. The news media get heaps of media releases every day and they don't have time to read every one, or have the space to fit them all in.

The key thing is to grab their attention by putting the most important or interesting information in the first sentence.

Allow one sentence for each new idea or information you want to include. Don't try to stick too many details in one sentence, or it will be too hard to read.

The media release should aim to answer the six basic questions that the media will want to know before considering whether to use it. These are:

What?

- If it's an event, what's it about and what's it called?
- If it's an issue, what's the problem?

Where?

- Where is the event being held?
- Is this a local, nationwide, or worldwide issue?

When?

- When's it happening? Make sure you give the date and start/finish times.
- Sometimes issues need to be sorted out quickly – such as plans to close a local community centre. The media need to know that.

How?

- How has the event been organised?
- How can the issue be fixed (e.g., local council funding)?

Why?

- Why is the event happening? What's its purpose?
- Why should the public care about the issue?

Who?

- Who's organising or hosting the event? Who are the important people involved?
- Who are the people responsible for deciding what will happen (e.g., Minister, council)?

Pictures and captions

Including a good photo and descriptive caption can mean the website or newspaper will be much more interested in publishing your story.

Permissions

You must get the permission of the people you quote or photograph before you send off your media release.

When you've written up your media release, you need to:

- Get someone to proofread it. It's a good idea to run it through an online grammar-checker too. Make sure you haven't got any spelling mistakes or incorrect facts. Make sure that people's names and contact phone numbers are right.
- Email it through to a website, newspaper, or radio, or TV station – or even all four. You'll be able to find their contact details online. It should be addressed to the 'Chief Reporter', 'Editor' or a specific journalist and have a cover note that briefly explains what it's about.
- Someone from the media may contact you for an interview, ask some questions or take a photograph. Have a look at the Media Interviews guide and make sure you're available to meet or talk with them.
- Check that week to see if your media release was posted, printed, or broadcast. If it wasn't, don't worry – good on you for trying and don't give up. Next time you have something interesting happening or new to say, rewrite the media release with the new information and try again.

What does a media release look like?

A media release will usually have five parts.

1. **At the top of the paper:** write **MEDIA RELEASE** in bold. Below that, include the date you're sending it out.
2. **Headline:** The aim is to catch the reader's eye and their interest. The headline should be in bold and give a clue of what the media release is about.
3. **Introduction or angle:** This is the first thing the editor or journalist will read, so it has to grab their attention and make them want to keep reading. The first sentence should be a quick summary of what the media release is about (less than 35 words). It will also answer one or some of the six basic questions that the reader will want to know, including: What? Why? Who? When? Where? How?
4. **Body:** This is the main part of the media release. It should answer all the rest of the questions the reader wants to know that aren't covered in the introduction. It's a good idea to include a quote from someone who can explain what the project or event is about.

   When you've finished writing your media release, write the word **"ENDS"** in bold at the bottom after the text. This is to let the media know that there's no more information that should be included in the story.

   If your media release is more than one page, write the word **"MORE"** at the bottom of each page so that they know there is more information to come.
5. **Contact information:** Put contact details at the end of your media release in case the media need more information.

Example – Media Release for an event

Note: The media release is being sent out a week before the actual event so the media has time to do something about it.

1. **MEDIA RELEASE**
   8 September 2023

2. **Headline**
   Young people taking up the challenge

3. **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 September in Wellington.

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

4. **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 includes 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 a great event. We're here to get our voices heard and get the skills to make that happen," says Bruno, one of the organisers.

Quote from someone involved in the event, which also answers the 'Why" question.

ENDS

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

Media Interviews

Knowing how to get your message across to the media can do a lot to actually get your message heard; doing media interviews is one way to achieve this. The trick is to be prepared.

It's important to go into every media interview with your own messages – two or three points that you want to get across regardless of the questions you're asked.

Before the interview

Decide who's going to do the interview. It needs to be someone who's clued up on what to say and is comfortable with speaking.

If you can't find anyone to do the interview, or you can't do it yourself, make a time with the reporter and when you've got someone, phone them back and do the interview. Make sure you phone back when agreed. Otherwise, you may find it hard to get the media interested next time you send out a media release or want some publicity.

Get prepared

When you get asked for an interview, ask the reporter what they want to talk about before you agree to do it.

Once you know what the interview is about, you can prepare and think about the following:

- Who is the audience?
- Who is it you want to convince?
- What do you want them to know?
- Why does this issue matter?
- What do you want them to do (also known as a 'call to action')?
- Decide what message you want to send to those readers or listeners.
- Develop a punchy way to get your message across. You need to be able to sum it up in a short sentence. It should use everyday words that everyone understands.
- Don't try to memorise what you want to say because it will sound rehearsed. Practise your key points so you're familiar with them and comfortable when you answer questions.
- Try to figure out what the tough questions may be and plan the answers beforehand. If you find it helpful, get someone to practise the interview with you.

During the interview

First, be yourself; warmth and enthusiasm work with most reporters and will come across well. Remember to keep to your topic, don't ramble and focus on sticking to the question.

- If you don't understand the question, tell the reporter, and get them to ask it in a different way.
- If you don't know an answer to a question, be honest and say you don't know. You can say that you can get back to them with an answer later on, when you've had a chance to find the information they asked for.
- Speak clearly and take your time. There is no need to rush, think about the answer in your mind first.
- Whenever you can, use the points you've decided you have to make when you answer the reporter's questions. Don't leave them to the end; they are far less likely to get into the story.
- If you disagree with something the interviewer says in a question, say so when you start to answer. The disagreement must come right after the question, so it won't get cut out when the piece is edited.
- If a question gives you a set of choices, you don't have to accept them; you can offer your own alternative. e.g.,
    - "If the park restoration goes ahead the Council won't be able to afford the library rebuild. Which would you choose?"
    - "We would like the opportunity to look at how we can help – there are fundraising options we could explore."
- If a reporter asks you a lot of questions at once, then pick the question that makes it easiest for you to get to your message and answer that. 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.
- Enjoy it – it's your chance to say what you want to say!

Things you need to know

Always assume that you are on camera – you may be.

Always assume that any microphone is on – it might be.

With TV and Radio, it's critical that you be able to put your message into a very short answer. Always make your key point first and be clear. After you've made your key point, add background information – since the footage/audio will be edited later it gives you the best chance to get your point in.

If you're going to be on a show, watch or listen to it first. Get a feel for the interviewer and how the show works. Make sure you find out when the show will be on and how long it is.

If you get interrupted, try not to get louder or talk faster. Keep your voice and speed steady and keep talking. Most importantly, stick to what you were saying and don't get side-tracked.

Tips for radio

If you're doing a radio interview the rules are the same, but the approach is slightly different. Because no one can see you or read what you have said, your voice and how you use it is really important. It may sound strange, but how your voice sounds will affect how other people "see you".

For example, if you sound bored then people will think you're bored. If you sound cheerful and enthusiastic (even if you're not feeling it), then people will think that you and whatever you're talking about is interesting.

By sounding passionate and interested in what you're talking about, others will feel inspired too.

Tips for TV

- When you're on TV, smile (unless the subject matter is sad).
- On TV, always look at the reporter. Never look at the camera.

Things to remember:

- You don't have to give an interview to a reporter. You always have the choice to say that you aren't able to comment.
- Never lie to a reporter. You might lose your credibility with the reporters (and the public if the lie becomes a part of the story).
- Don't exaggerate (don't say hundreds of people will be affected by this issue if you can only prove 50 will).
- Don't say anything to a reporter that you don't want to read about online or hear about on TV.

Avoid making "off the record" comments to a reporter because it's likely that some reporters will still report "off the record" comments. It's better not to say anything you don't want reported

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