

WRITING LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor can be **great** to get info out to large numbers of people. The letters page is the second most widely read page in the newspaper. Journalists read the letters page.

Once you've set up an email group, you can send your letter to dozens of newspapers with the press of a single button. With practice, you'll learn to write good letters and to write them quickly.

Letter Writing Tips:

- * KISS - Keep it Short and Simple. Maximum 200 words and use short sentences. Some great letters are just 20-50 words. Your letter is much more likely to get published if your letter is short. There seems to be trend towards publishing larger number of very short letters in some papers, especially in tabloids. Conversely, don't waste your time writing 300-400+ word letters: they have zero chance of getting published.
- * Aim to respond before 1pm on the day of an issue arising (aiming for publication the following day).
- * Encourage other people to write letters on the issue: editors select letters proportionate to those they receive: if 80% of letters responding to an article on nuclear power oppose the nuclear industry, editors will include four letters against nuclear, and one letter in favour.
- * Funny/clever letters are more likely to be published and to stick in people's minds.
- * Look at the style of letters published in that paper.
- * Avoid defamation. Stick to the issue rather than making personal attacks.
- * File your letters so you can resend or edit sometime later.
- * Some newspapers are better than others, e.g. the Australian Financial Review is (surprisingly) friendly.
- * Aim to write a letter in no more than 5-10 minutes ... if it takes longer, it's most likely too long!
- * Your letter is most likely to get published if the letter is REACTING to articles or letters in the paper. But sometimes letters to editor can GENERATE some discussion/debate in the letters page, so don't discount that possibility.
- * Most letters can be sent to many newspapers, increased chance of publication (and decreased chance of getting disinterested in letter writing and giving up). You can set up an email group list - but letters editors will probably not publish a letter if they know it has been sent to lots of newspapers so use the blind carbon copy (BCC) option.
- * Most of your letters will not get published ... but the same applies to everyone else.
- * There is no harm including a possible title for the letter, though a different title may be given by the editor.
- * Carbon copy (cc) or blind carbon copy (bcc) to colleagues, your local MP, etc.
- * For email: write in the body of the email (not as an attachment). No formatting (no colour, bold etc).
- * Check your spelling, for grammar and clarity in your ideas.
- * You must include the date, your name and address and day-time phone number, in case the newspaper wants to verify that you are the real author of the letter or wants to check detail/s (usually they don't).
- * If responding to an article/or letter, you need to mention it in your letter. Each paper will have a standard format for doing this. E.g. *Terry Kreig misses the point with his diatribe about the 'wonders' of nuclear energy (letters, March 29)*. Or for a response to an article, something like this: *I would like to correct one point in John Smith's otherwise excellent article on nuclear power ('Nuclear No Go Zone', July 13)*. Obviously if you're writing a generic letter and sending it to lots of newspapers, you won't reference one particular news item from one particular media source (because all the other media sources will ignore your letter). Usually a generic letter will be in response to something that has got widespread media coverage, e.g. prominent politician.

EMAIL ADDRESSES FOR LETTERS EDITORS

NATIONAL

Australian Financial Review <edletters@afr.com.au> or via web: <www.afr.com/home/letter.aspx>

The Australian <letters@theaustralian.com.au>

Business Review Weekly letters (2005) <brweditor@brw.fairfax.com.au>

Crikey <boss@crikey.com.au>

VICTORIA

Herald-Sun <hsletters@hwt.newsltd.com.au>

Sunday Herald Sun <shsletters@hwt.newsltd.com.au>

The Age <letters@theage.fairfax.com.au>

MX (Melb) <talk@mxnet.com.au>

Melbourne Times (weekly) <letters.tmt@fairfax.com.au>

Geelong Advertiser <yoursay@geelongadvertiser.com.au>

ACT

Canberra Times <letters.editor@canberratimes.com.au>

NSW

Sydney Morning Herald <letters@smh.com.au>

Daily Telegraph <dtmletr@matp.newsltd.com.au> or <letters@dailytelegraph.com.au>

NSW Sunday Telegraph <suntele@matp.newsltd.com.au> or <letters@sundaytelegraph.com.au>

Sun Herald <shletters@mail.fairfax.com.au>

Illawarra Mercury BOUNCING: <editor@illnews.com.au>

NT

Northern Territory News <ntnmail@ntn.newsltd.com.au>

Alice Springs News <alicenews@ozemail.com.au>

Katherine Times <mail@kathtimes.com.au>

Territory Times <mark@territorytimes.com.au>

Centralian Advocate <ceneditorial@ntn.newsltd.com.au>

Tennant and District Times <media@tdtimes.com.au>

QUEENSLAND

Courier Mail <cmletters@qnp.newsltd.com.au>

Qld Sunday Mail <smletters@qnp.newsltd.com.au>

Cairns Post <editorial@tcp.newsltd.com.au>

SA

Adelaide Advertiser <advedit@adv.newsltd.com.au>, or via website form:
<www.news.com.au/adelaidenow>.

Sunday Mail <mailedit@adv.newsltd.com.au>

The Murray Pioneer (Country SA) <mpioneer@riverland.net.au>

Coober Pedy Times <cptimes@ozemail.com.au>. Letters <500 words.

Yorke Peninsula Country Times: <ypct@ypct.com.au>

The Monitor (Roxby Downs) <editor@themonitor.com.au> <www.themonitor.com.au>

TASMANIA

Tasmania: Mercury <mercuryedletter@dbl.newsltd.com.au>

Examiner: <editor@examiner.com.au>

WA

Western Australian <letters@wanews.com.au> or <http://www.thewest.com.au/LetterToTheEditor.aspx>

OTHER TIPS

Useful media info at this website:

* <media.socialchange.net.au/using_media/Contents.html>

Write yourself a template:

Write yourself a **template** like this and keep it where you can easily find it when you get the letter writing itch ...

Date

Dear Letters Editor,

I would be grateful if you could consider the following letter.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Address

Ph

Email

TITLE

... text of letter ...

Name

Suburb