



Homeowners Guide to Local Media Coverage Sustainable House Day (SHD)

This document is designed to assist local SHD organisers and homeowners to obtain local media coverage and raise the profile of your personal Sustainable House Day event. It has a guide to getting in touch with journalists and doing interviews; as well as a list of resources available for use.

Who to contact

Local Papers

- Most papers list their contact details inside the front page (or close to) of all key journalists.
- You can either contact the editor directly or read the paper for a few weeks to see if there's a journalist who consistently covers home & lifestyle or environment focused stories.

Local/Relevant Bloggers

- Locate any local bloggers who cover local event, environment, home or topical issues that can be aligned with Sustainable House Day.

Local Radio/Television

- If the station has a website, see if you can find the contact details on it or look them up in the phone book.
- Review the website or listen to the radio station to identify any regular shows, journalists or presenters who cover relevant topics aligned with SHD.
- Don't call the number they give on air for talkback – this number will take you through to the producer of whoever's on air at the time who usually doesn't have time to listen to you.

Local Groups

- Identify any complementary local groups in the area who may have a newsletter, social media groups or contacts to advertise SHD
- Print and distribute the dedicated SHD poster to any local businesses, cafes or relevant groups that will display the notice. The poster will be available for downloading via the sustainable house day website <http://sustainablehouseday.com/about-shd/forms/>
- Don't forget your own social groups – sending notices via email, facebook, twitter, text or get on the phone and give them a call.

What to send/pitch

- Identify any “local” interest stories that the specific media contact may be interested in. It could be the fact SHD is on, your sustainable journey or knowledge, the beneficial impacts of your lifestyle or placing a local angle on a current national story/headline etc.
- Keep pitches short, succinct and to the point of who, what, where, when and why, approx. 200-400 words within the email
- Include all contact details when pitching (name, email, contact phone number)
- Provide the media with the relevant SHD factsheet, media release and poster (all available from <http://sustainablehouseday.com/about-shd/forms/>)
- If they need further information or confirmation of your participation feel free to give them the national organiser’s details – shd@renew.org.au

Getting in touch

- Commence outreach a few weeks before the event so journalists have time to prepare for photographers or themselves to attend. Tweak pitch closer to the date as a follow up email.
- If you’re not comfortable with cold calling, email information to the attention of the journalist first then follow up the next day with a phone call. Always ensure you follow up, as journalists/media outlets can be inundated with media requests and a follow up call will bring it to their attention.
- If you want to cold call, remember you only have a few minutes to catch the journalist’s attention. It helps to write a short script of what you want to say and keep it nearby when you phone. The best pitch is one that relates directly to their target audience.
- Try to get a direct phone number and email address for the journalist – it makes life easier in the long run
- Make a note of any commitments they make to you (and you to them) and follow up as soon as you can. Homeowners Guide to Local Media Coverage
- Action any response from the media straight away so you do not miss the window of opportunity. Journalists are time poor and understaffed so when they ask for something make sure you give them what they want immediately or at least let them know that you are chasing this up.

Being Interviewed

Preparation

- It’s like a job interview – if you can spend an hour beforehand thinking about what you want to say, you’ll sound articulate and interesting
- Be careful about making jokes – not everyone in the audience will “get it” and you might sound a bit odd or offend someone
- If photos or film are being taken onsite, have a quick think about where the best spot is
- Get together everything you want to give the journalist – media release, fact sheet, house profile etc
- Create a list of the salient points you need to mention or may be asked and keep it with you to refer to during your interview.

Newspapers

- If you have photos or images for the journalist, the preferred formats are: o Electronic jpeg files with resolution of at least 300 dpi (dots per inch)
- Ask the journalist to print the website address and information number: www.sustainablehouseday.com and your local contact number
- When the article comes out, make a photocopy and send it to the national organisers so we can show it off 😊

Radio

- Remember to speak slowly – everyone rushes when they’re nervous
- Speak in short sentences – practice beforehand if you need to, then you won’t find yourself umming and erring so much
- There are two types of interviews – pre-recorded and live. Both can be done by phone or in the studio. Prerecorded interviews can also be done with a tape recorder at another site.

- Studio and pre-recorded interviews:
 - Sit close to the microphone or tape recorder when speaking and back when you're not – the sound of heavy breathing while the presenter is talking doesn't sound good
 - Make a list of the points you want to make and keep it nearby while talking
 - Don't shuffle papers – listeners will hear it. Have everything on one sheet

- If you are interviewed by phone:
 - Use a land line, not a mobile
 - Turn off call waiting
 - Put the phone in a quiet room and shut the door if you can
 - Don't have your radio on
 - Don't talk when the presenter is talking – they have a button which shuts you off automatically when their microphone is being used, so no-one will hear you
 - Make a list of the points you want to make and keep it nearby while talking
 - Smile while you talk – this sounds cheesy but you can hear the difference
 - Be ready at least 10 minutes beforehand – if they aren't running to time they may want to interview earlier than expected
 - Usually you'll be able to hear what the presenter is saying for a few minutes beforehand because the studio feed is usually the "on hold" music
 - When you hear the presenter say "good morning [your name]" that's when you're on air. Don't say "oh is that me?" or "am I on air?" Just say "good morning" or "Good morning [their name]"

- If the radio station gets some calls during a live interview, they might ask if you want to answer some talkback questions. It's churlish to refuse to do so on air, so if you don't feel confident, let the presenter and producer know before the interview. If you do take some talkback:
 - Keep your answers short and to the point
 - Admit if you don't know the answer, say you'll find out and let the presenter know; or ask the caller to leave their number with the producer so you can call later
 - Don't get into debates with ratbags – be pleasant and put your message across without arguing.
 - Some good phrases to remember: Homeowners Guide to Local Media Coverage
 - "I'm glad you've raised that point Bill, because that's a really common misconception that many people have about [solar power/greenhouse effect/solar hot water etc]"
 - "A lot of people would agree with you, but it's interesting that the bulk of scientific evidence points to [the other point of view]"
 - "we may just have to agree to differ and let the listeners make up their own minds"
 - "That has been a controversial issue, but I think it's important to balance the needs of [whatever – eg people who hate windfarms] with the need of the wider community for [opposing view – benefits of renewable energy for all for example]"

- Give the website address (www.sustainablehouseday.com) and info number at the end (03 9639 1500)
- Thank the presenter on air for the opportunity
- Thank the producer on the way out

Television

- Looks are important on TV – check yourself over in the mirror before you get in front of the camera
- The following shirts show up badly on TV:
 - White if you're in bright sunlight or you have pale skin
 - Anything with wide stripes or checks
 - Complicated or loud patterns
 - Black, dark brown, dark grey, navy blue, bottle green – you'll look like a blob with a talking head
 - Bright red and hot pink

- Fluorescent colours
- Light blue is considered the safest colour (that's why so many newsreaders wear it)
- Don't wear dangly earrings or jangly bangles – they're distracting to the viewer
- When you are being interviewed, look at the journalist, not the camera
- Try to stand still – don't shift your weight from foot to foot.
- Keep your gaze steady without staring – if you let it dart all over the place, you'll look shifty
- Keep your hands down out of the shot – try not to gesture (very hard to do sometimes!), don't fiddle with your hair, your lapel etc. It is acceptable to shoo flies away quickly, because you don't want to be on telly with flies all over your face!
- As with radio – practice what you want to say beforehand, speak slowly and use short sentences.

Further information

Make sure you share any news coverage you have received with the national organisers.

We would love to spread the word. If you need additional information please do not hesitate to contact us on shd@renew.org.au or (03) 9639 1500.