

## Better Information Workshop - March 2020

### Lynne

Welcome, everybody to this Better Information session brought to you from our lounge rooms in these extraordinary times and before I introduce you to our star talent for today, I'd like to acknowledge that we all are on the lands of the traditional custodians of our great nation and to pay my deepest respects to them and to all their descendants for the extraordinary care and attention they have shown in shepherding this, this land of hours through millennia of diverse experiences and trials and tribulations like the ones that we're all experiencing now. So I think useful to get some perspective on on the way in which this land has been cared for through all those generations. Joining us today to talk about managing mainstream media is a man who knows this inside and out and many of you will be familiar with him. He works closely with us at the foundation and he is always a joy to be with and to hear from Mick Paskos from On Message media. Good morning.

### Mick

Good morning, Lynne. And thanks very much on behalf first of all, on behalf of both during the Welcome to Country, very important, and thank you for doing that. And it's, it's great to be here and looking forward to our chat.

### Lynne

Right? Well, I think the first part of this conversation and we're going to split it into two parts. And obviously if we were doing this, with our regular format at the Foundation, we would have lots of interactive type opportunities, but unfortunately on this occasion, it's just a conversation between you and me. We will try and keep it as colourful and amusing and as valuable as possible. But we look forward to a time when we can once again talk to people directly and pick up on some of these issues. First of all, I think, Mick, the first part is really in your bailiwick. It's about, okay, what does media look like when you're coming at it from a sort of community legal or community sector point of view? And then later when we're talking about what it's like to be on the media, then maybe I have a bit more to contribute. But let's talk about, you know, your definitions of what mainstream media is and what is it we're talking about? Because in in the current environment, we are constantly talking about social media. That's not what we're on about today, really, is it?

### Mick

Yeah, ordinarily, and thanks for that. And it's always good because people have different assumptions. So it's good to, I guess, start by defining terms. And I think by mainstream or traditional media, I'm really thinking of print newspapers and magazines, radio and television, both commercial, private and the ABC. I mean, if you want to expand it, people can say that traditional media includes direct mail. Even billboards, I guess. But really, we're talking about print radio and telly. And now, I mean, it's a bit interesting because a lot of what we actually call new media, or new ways of communicating have also

been around for a long time as well. I mean, the first email I'm looking a little bit to my notes here, but the first email was sent 51 years ago, in 1971. The first website was launched almost 30 years ago. Facebook started in 2004. The first Tweet was in 2006. And one of the newest kids on the block is Tik Tok, in all its glory and infamy. Tick Tock started in 2016. So there's a lot of what we call new media that's been around for a while, but really today, or as you said, quickly, community label sectors and others who would have been attending this workshop, where we're really focused on how to get media, how to get your message across in traditional print, traditional radio and traditional television.

## **Lynne**

Because it's still a really valuable channel, I think social media is enormously powerful. And we've, we've all learnt over recent times, what an impact it can have. But if you just want to hear a whole range of people that you might not otherwise have ever engaged with, the mainstream media is still terribly useful. But I suppose that the challenge is, how do you navigate that landscape? Because it can seem pretty daunting, a bit of a closed world. So how do you get in and find out where your message will make the most impact on those channels?

## **Mick**

Yeah. Well, then I think there's a couple of really good points and you know, first of all, you mentioned social media, and really any media campaign doesn't need to be either or, it's really both and. So we really look, and even when we're looking at some of the strategies later for getting traditional media, we'll also talk about how you can use your social media to amplify that and reinforce it. And I was also thinking about one of the points that you made when we, you and I were, no pun intended, workshopping this workshop. And you really pointed out the difference between social media, which is very targeted. And if we remember you said broadcast media, by definition is broadcast. It just goes to a huge wide range of people.

## **Lynne**

So how do you find the right bit of that, that behemoth that is broadcast media that will be interested in your messages and in in your issues? Well,

## **Mick**

good, and I think I'll take one moment Lynne to, I guess, convince our viewers and our audience of why traditional media is still really important. And then I'll, I'll jump into that question. I did a little bit of reading. And I look like Roy Morgan, which is a major market research company. They did a report last year with a survey. 50,000 Australians, and Roy Morgan is a very reputable organisation, 50,000 is a lot of people and they found that news is the most watched TV genre every week. So we're talking about why do we want to get our message maybe on the six o'clock news or the 630 news or the seven, well the reason is that more than one in two Australians are watching TV news every night. And in terms of their survey, that was the leader in terms of genres and types. So news, tv news is still really important. Over a third of Australians according to this survey, are watching television current affairs every night, Four Corners, A Current affair, 60 Minutes. So it's really, there is there are a lot of people watching TV news, in terms of radio, just in terms of commercial radio alone. The most recent statistics showed, and

these were 2018 figures, that 10.7 million Australians, Monday to Friday, tuned into commercial radio. Now that's almost 11 million people turning to commute, sorry, tuning into commercial radio Monday to Friday. Now that's before you're adding the ABC with its myriad of channels or SBS, or the wonderful array of community radio programs. So let's add them in. You've got 12 13, 14 million people listening to radio every week. Put that in context, Australia's population is roughly a tick over 25 million people. So that's a lot of eyeballs watching, and a lot of ears listening to what we call traditional media, it still has a real impact and a real sway. So I think social media has a very important role and it's very exciting. But, there's really room for both. So I think I just wanted to sort of make that, make that point because a lot of our younger, I mean thinking about it a bit more. A lot of our maybe younger people listening to this workshop. And arguably a lot of them get their news via their Facebook feed and their social media feeds, but also really half the population is still listening to and watching commercial media each week. So, I think I'm so Lynne, sorry, I went off on that digression, I got there eventually.

## **Lynne**

What I call the Mick Paskos specialty, which is, how do you find the right destination for your story? Because there is, you know, this massive array of options, and stations and channels and newspapers and magazines and all the rest. But you want to make sure that your effort is as effective as possible. You're not going to spend a whole lot of time chasing things or pushing things that aren't that aren't going to bear fruit. So how do you identify where you want to pitch your story?

## **Mick**

No, no, thanks, Lynne. And I think that's a really, really important question. And I think the way I always start, is to ask why. Why are we seeking media at this point in time, and irrespective of what time, the Why is really important, because that will help us go to the next step of how we target. So sometimes the Y might be as simple as, we have an event on and we need to sell tickets, or we're launching a really important publication, and we want people to order it, buy it or download it for free. And other times the why we're seeking media might be a little bit more complex or multifaceted. So it might be state or federal budget night, and we want to get our opinion on, it might be the lead up to Budget right back when maybe the Expenditure Review Committees is doing its work until we want to get into the media to influence what will actually happen on Budget night. So I think it's really first of all, you know, why do we want, because that actually helps us take the first step down the right path to get where we want to go, to get the result we want to get. And then also as a part of that. I also think you asked, you know, who, who do we want to reach? So maybe sometimes it's only, not only, I'll rephrase that, sometimes the main people we want to reach are maybe the members of our organisation, so we might be a community group with a clientele, we might be a membership group, and the only people we need to reach this time are the members of our organisation, or other times there might be multiple audiences, we might want to meet, get to members of our organisation members of the public, the government, the opposition, vested interest groups, the media and so on. And the reason why I asked who and why first, is that sometimes and this might be a bit counterintuitive, at some time, sometimes it means that maybe you don't need to seek media. Maybe you have ways of, first of all, getting your message out without having to chase media, because a lot of the people who will be watching this presentation, there'll be from the community sector, from other groups, volunteer people, who are all

working really hard running on the smell of an oily rag. So sometimes, there's a way to actually get the message out without having to chase media. And if I may, there's, if I could explain a bit further, a lot of people talk about the difference between what's called owned media, the media, you own, paid media and earned media. So, with owned media, owned media are the media channels that your organisation owns, so that will be all the print publications, you produce. Your website, you own it, your email list, you own it, your social media, you own it. And sometimes all you need to do is actually send out your information via your own media channels. And that may be all that you need to do. Paid media just quickly is when you pay for advertising, but what we're really now I mean, the main point is we're talking about earned media. Earned media is when you have a message and you're doing what we're talking about today, you're trying to get into The Age and, and the Herald Sun. So the first step really is basically working out, do we really need to chase the mainstream media? And then once we do that we go into the next steps.

## **Lynne**

Cool. So once you've identified that, then what?

## **Mick**

Okay. Alright, so I just took a glass of water, but I don't know whether I broke a protocol there or something. All right. So I talked about, the next thing to do is scanning the media landscape, it's basically finding out who's who in the media zone. Because once we start looking, we really realise there are so many options, and I think we need to look and find out, think about what media outlets are out there. And then a media outlet, what publications or programs it has, so first of all, we've got, say the ABC, publications and programs, many TV channels, many radio stations, many online, and with within each of them, many programs. And then, even further, there's so many journalists and producers and presenters. So I actually start trying to make sure that I'm up to date as possible with actually what options are out there. Because the more that I know about what the options are that are out there, the more I can start to target or strategize, to try and reach this specific media outlet, and within that outlet particular program, and even within that program, a particular journalist or reporter, so, I mean, it's asking, it's asking a lot because we've got print, we've got radio or TV. So what I might do is I'll, I'll take print, for example and I'll drill down a little bit more. So we'll start with the easy stuff. The most high profile print or you know mainstream media print publications, I guess you'd say would be The Age, The Herald Sun, the Australian Financial Review, leading newspapers, The Saturday Paper, The Monthly and so on. So we look at those and we think okay and in particular in Victoria, you know, with, let's say the The Age and the Herald Sun. But then what we do is we look at each of those, and we look a little bit more closely. So, let's look for example, at The age and the Herald Sun and, and drill down a bit. So rather than think I just want to get something in The Age or the Herald Sun, if we look a little bit more closely so we can see the wood from the trees, we realise that each of these newspapers has different sections, which run every day. Right? It's not to say one newspaper or two newspaper made of sections so they've got local news, state news. Federal news sections, international news, business, features columnists, op eds, letters to the Editor. So I guess we start to break it apart. And actually think, right, it's not just the Herald Sun that I'm seeking to get information into, I'm trying to get into the business section or the news section. And then if we look a little bit more closely, and this particularly

helps if you go to the website to these different newspapers, many of these sections have subsections. And I don't want to get a little bit like Alice down there, down the rabbit hole, and it will become too dizzying. And at first, it might seem that there's too much going on, but I guess my message is to try and really understand the publication and look a little bit more closely. So with each of those sections, they have subsections. So for example, the business section of The Age, you think, alright I want to get something into the business section of the age. It has sections called Consumer Affairs, workplace, small business, banking. So you might think, right, I've looked more closely I need to get this, might be Consumer Affairs, Victoria has a publication. The best place is the business section of The Age. And the best subsection is, you know, a particular subsection. So I really, my message is really, initially to start trying to see what's out there. And sometimes we want to rush out and just try and get a result but there's a bit of self discipline and focus and a bit of work about really identifying the sections and some publications. So a lot of people who are watching and listening will work in the legal sector. So, for example, the Australian and the Australian Financial Review, have a particular section called Legal Affairs. Now that doesn't appear every day in the print version, it appears every Friday. So every Friday, the Australian Financial Review, the Fin... have a legal affairs section. So Lynne, that's sort of some examples of where, if you look more closely, not only the daily sections and spots, you get a bit more of an idea. So for example, if you look at the Saturday Age, it has John Sylvester's wonderful, Naked City column, but that only appears on a Saturday, the Herald Sun has the wonderful Saturday lift out called Weekend. So, it's my first message is about looking really, really closely to see what else what's out there.

## **Lynne**

Excellent thinking Mick, but I suppose also, what if you just want everyone to read it? What if you just do want, you know, as big an audience as you can get, which section or how do you pitch that, and do you need to send them a media release?

## **Mick**

Well, I think it, I think it, ah media releases are really, really important and I think it so sometimes we can try and be really targeted and really hit a particular section of a publication. Other times, we might create a media release and then send it to the newspaper or the radio outlet. So for example, at newspapers, there will be usually a news desk, or a news tips email address. So for the for the Age or the Herald Sun, for TV and radio, there will be general email addresses that we can send media releases to. So there are ways to I guess, broadcast it and send it to a wide audience as well as trying to target an audience.

## **Lynne**

So let's take that. And then I should add that the same is true in broadcast radio as well in particular and television that each program has its specific brief and if you listen to that program, you can hear the sort of regular features that come up and the sort of people that they talk to and identify which parts of programming you might, you might be able to slot your, your particular story into. But let's move to that media release thing because I think people get sometimes a bit caught up in whether or not that's

absolutely necessary, and if yes, then how do you do it? What does a media release have to have to say in order to, to attract the sort of attention you want?

## **Mick**

Alright, so a media release is. So a media release is like a short news story that really explains, which is basically something that's saying to people, stop what you're doing, and read or listen to what I've sent you. So it really is you trying to get people's attention. And you will find that with media, with many media outlets, if you read them up to pitch them a story or talk them about it, they will not talk to you unless you've already created a media release. Now, that's not all. All media outlets, but a lot of are that way. And that's, I think, very valid because, you know, journalists are very time poor, they're increasingly time poor, they're increasingly multitasking, and a media release helps convince them that what you're talking about is actually going to happen. So, you know, the journalist doesn't really want to hear that look we're thinking of doing this incredibly worthy publication or thinking of doing this fun run or whatever and the journalist thinks that's wonderful. But please come back to me when, when it when it's said and when it's ready. So most times, you need to do a media release. So to convince the journalist that actually, this is something that's worth pursuing. And a media release really is, you know, if we go back to the very old journalism school, I don't know if they teach it anymore, Lynne, because it's been it's been a while, but it was used to be the old who, what, when, where, how and why. So really, it has to have all the really fundamental information about you know, what this is, when it's happening or when it's happened. What difference it's going to make, it really has to basically help explain to the journalist all the questions that she or he might have, and, and something at journalism school that some people used to teach is they used to talk about the coffee shop test, because a lot of people might say, I don't know how to do a media release. And so one way of thinking about it is, imagine, you know, not that we can do at the moment, Lynne, at the time of COVID-19. But if we cast our minds nostalgically back to when we could catch up with people or coffee, or cast our mind, optimistically forward to when we can do that wonderful thing, again, imagine that you've caught up with a really good friend. And there's something really exciting that's happened at your work, your work has launched something or it's got funding to do something. And your friend says, okay, please tell me about it. You know, Mick, tell me about it. And then you just tell them, and if you imagine you're having a coffee with a friend, and you're telling them the most important things, the things that have got you excited then that's a really good way to start looking at a media release. Now there are plenty of resources online and we can, we can include some links as well to you know, the detail about how to structure a media release, and you know different paragraphs and topic sentences and keywords, sorry, that's the former English teacher in me coming out. But that might be worthwhile, but a little bit dull, but I think, So we can put some links in about that. Some other things about media releases, some quick points. It's really important to include a direct speech quote, so they're the quotes that you see in inverted commas from your CEO or Executive Director or the person in charge of the project. So the words that don't have inverted commas around them are what we call indirect speech, the words, the direct quote, the speech bubbles, they're really important to have in there as well? And the reason is, is that with the increasing use of online media, plus very time poor journalists, if you present a media outlet with a really well crafted media release, right or wrong, ethical or unethical, you know, tut tut or not, but if it's a well written media laced, release, hungry media outlets might just publish it in toto in full.

And as long as your media release is telling the truth, as long as it's fair, you know, and that's really important. Of course, everything must always be true, for everything must be fair. And there can't be deliberate omission, but as long as you're telling the truth, and you're trying to promote something worthwhile, a well crafted media release may end up in full on this news outlet's, you know, website. That's a really important thing that a media release can do, particularly also if you make sure to either attach or included Dropbox, Dropbox link to photos so I'm now talking about photos and images. So if Joe Bloggs is your CEO when she is quoted, then either attach or have a Dropbox links, Dropbox link to a couple of folders, preferably with both low and high res low resolution and high resolution photos of Jo, low resolution for websites or if it's a print publication, high resolution. If there are other relevant images, include them. If you have video, short video and it's good enough quality, include that if you're tooled up enough to have gifs or images for social media. The more of those things that you can add if you have them, the more that you can hand to the journalists, to the reporter, the more likelihood that a media release will be used. So a media release is still very, very effective and very, very useful.

## **Lynne**

I think you're absolutely right, Mick that, that sounding excited about, you know, whatever it is that you want to communicate is key, and that sometimes people feel a sense of formality when they're drafting content like this, which it crushes the story to an unfortunate extent. So I think that's absolutely right. Think of, you know, the most enthusiastic outsider you can in your mind, and speak to them literally as you're drafting. I think that that helps get the right sort of level of passion and commitment in the media release, that then will be conveyed to the to the audience you're trying to get through to the journalists and the producers. And they'll pick up on that, that level of energy as well. Can we flip now to being excited about it when you're actually involved with the media once they've decided that your story is a good one, and that they want to talk to you? Because I suppose that's the sort of next logical progression. You've managed your way through the, the labyrinth of media choices, and you found a journal or a presenter or a producer that that wants to pick up on the story that you've presented to them. And now they want to interview you. So what's that like? And how are we going to, to best prepare you for that experience? So I've been on both sides of this, but primarily on the interviewing side, as opposed to the interviewee side. You've done a fair bit of media in your time, Mick?

## **Mick**

I have Lynne, but I am going to defer to you, because your your reputation and experience in your wonderful career at the ABC, I think starting in WA and also in Victoria and I think in Tasmania across many many, programs ranging from...

enough, enough..

## **Mick**

alright. But I can and also for those who are listening so you're just going to have to sit here and let me just go over a couple of things, Lynne has been on both sides of the fence. So ABC, across any many wonderful programs, but also on the other side of the fence for organisations, including the City of Melbourne and the ACCC, you know, really sort of a significant roles. So, Lynne, it's interesting

because I guess the sort of work that that I do, has been trying to, when you're at the ABC, gather your interest, yes, it's about me trying to get, you know, and in the end, really when for those who are listening when a person is in Lynne's position or you're a radio presenter or a journalist or a producer, there are so many people trying to get your attention. And there are so many options. It's never about not having enough. It's really about filtering through so many things that are actually presented to you. So Lynne, I'm going to I'm going to put the question back to you, and maybe you could kick us off and I'll see if I can contribute.

## **Lynne**

All right, well, what I want to start with, because you're absolutely right, that there is never a shortage of content. There may oftentimes be a shortage of the right kind of content or the sort that you're absolutely after for any particular program. But the volume is unending. So you do need to stand out in your pitch to, especially to broadcast media, radio and television, for them to pick up on it. And there are ways and means of doing that, some of which we've covered off. But I suppose once you've got through that gate, what's it like to be interviewed and to prepare for an interview experience, because that can be pretty daunting if you only ever do one or two in your life. And it can be a fairly overwhelming experience for many people. And I've seen that oftentimes in people that are prepared for interviews and also sitting in a studio with people who are clearly very uncomfortable, because it is, you know, a very new environment for most people. So what you need to do in the first instance, if the journal rings you up either invited or otherwise, either because you put the word out saying we want to talk about x, or because there's a story running and they want your view on it, take control as best you can of that environment or that situation. So that means asking as many questions as you need to, in order to understand what it is they want from you. A lot of times I think media calls and people just say yes, yes, okay, fine, and then fret because they don't really know what it is they've bought into. So what you need to ask is, you know, what's your story? What's your angle? Who else are you talking to? If you want to talk to me, then when, and for how long? and under what circumstances? Do you want me in a studio? Do you want me on the telephone? Are you going to have anyone else there with me? Is it a debate? Is it a two way kind of experience? Are you planning to take talkback with this because all of those questions will give you a much stronger sense of the environment that you're about to play into, and that can be I think, enormously valuable in terms of how you prepare for those circumstances, because it can be pretty freaky if you walk into a radio studio or some, you know, a place you've never been before, and you suddenly discover that the person who's pushing the opposite side of your argument is sitting there too, and that you had no idea that they would be in the room, far less, you know, or on there with you, far less in the same room. So, most journalists and producers will fill you in on all of that, but you need to ask, and it also in that first instance of being approached by media gives you an opportunity to set some level of control around this environment, and ask all those questions before you agree to doing the interview. So, I think probably for our purposes, the best scenario to, to really explore, is one where you're happy to do the interview. It's not a negative or a difficult one. But one way you're actually really keen to communicate around this particular issue. So let's assume that somebody's rung you from the ABC drive program, and they're really keen to hear about your new report on this particular aspect of your work, and they want to talk to you, what do you do now? So that's, I suppose that next phase of development once you've understood and you've quizzed the

producer, whoever it is, who calls you about all the circumstances, to make sure you know what you're in for, then what do you do? Okay, go back to your beautifully crafted media release. That is written with passion but also as you put it, so well Mick, fairness and and clarity, and really draw out from that media release: What are the three things that you want an audience to hear? If they hear nothing else? What are the three things you want them to walk away with understanding and remembering? Because as you can imagine, you know, the volume of media consumption is huge. So you just need to think, all right, if nothing else, I want them to understand that the report was done with 5000 Victorians, all of whom have been through the community legal process over the last few years. I want that, so that's a volume thing, I want them to know it's big enough and credible. I want them to know that their experience was good, bad or indifferent. So, you know, the quality of that. And I want them to know why this makes a difference. So is it important because it might change the way service is delivered, is it important because government should be looking at this and thinking about changing policy. Is it important because it shows that regional Victoria is in need of more support than Metropolitan Melbourne, you know, all those sorts of things. So three things, whatever they are, and you can really workshop that. And I would suggest that you take a trusted colleague or friend down to another coffee shop, when again, that's plausible. And workshop that. What are the three things, and don't just assume you know them, because what you have to do is match that sort of really clear-eyed understanding with the audience that you're trying to reach. Because as you know, as is the case with newspapers, and really the case with radio and television, you have different audiences at different times of day, and they are looking for different kinds of understanding of a story. So the same story can be treated incredibly differently on breakfast television, as opposed to Drive on Radio National or the 730 Report over The Project on channel 10. So your language and your issue, your issues might remain the same. But the way you express them, the sort of lightness or, or depth of your language and your concepts will change, depending on what's the context or media environment that you're putting this into. And I mean, you will have seen this too Mick, you see stories treated on, for example, The Project. And the same stuff is up on the 730 Report. But the treatments could not be more different if you tried. And you might even have the same person on both programs. And if they've been well prepared, then they're handling that quite differently. So one thing I always encourage people to do is to think about the words and I'm, you know, getting really granular here and quite literal, but it's about do you talk about the numbers of swimming pools, or do you talk about the impact this has on policy? So you know, I mean you choose your language to match the complexity of the arguments that you're putting in the environments you're putting it into. And one thing just as a complete sidebar that holds a preoccupation that media would appear to have with swimming pools or Sydney Harbor or laps around the world or times it can take to get to the moon or MCG's, of course, you know, is because we crave analogy, we crave, crave some way of understanding big numbers and big issues. And if we can get a visual image in our minds of an MCG or a swimming pool or a Sydney Harbor, then it gives us some grasp of the enormity of whatever that is. So that's why people are always scrambling to find analogies and you hear it, I think, more in in media than anywhere else. But that's why. So analogies can be enormously useful to you in trying to introduce people to to ideas that they may not have considered before. Give them a link, give them a way in from what is happening in their world now, into your story. So if for example, there was a story running the week before about the challenges in regional Victoria, around say, bushfires support and your story or your angle is about the disparity between service

provision in regional and Metropolitan Victoria, say, well, of course, as we've seen in the Victorian bushfire response, you know, it was it was a very committed and universal response in the first instance. But now things have tapered off. And we're beginning to see that regional areas need more help. It's the same in our world. So you know, ways of blending people's current understanding of their world, and moving them into this new idea that you're trying to communicate is incredibly valuable. So I think you know, three messages, work them hard, and talk about them and make sure that they are absolutely the three things that you want an audience to understand. And, and then think about language. So ideas, language, and does that fit the media environment that you're putting it into? Is that the sort of language you hear on breakfast radio, is that the sort of language you hear on the 730 Report, and make sure they marry up to the sort of environments you're dropping them into. So there's a classic example, Mick, of somebody who who really didn't get his key messages sorted out, and I'm sure some of some of our audience will remember the very short lived political life of one Mal Meninga, who had an incredible career as a rugby league superstar, and then attempted to move into into politics, and it just didn't work out because he didn't get his messages straight.

## **Journalist 1**

I remember, September the 24th, 2001. It was the first day where ABC TV news, the Canberra edition was coming back on air. Now it was also the first day of Mal Meninga's political career. It was his first radio interview as a politician. It seemed to be going okay. And then something happened.

## **Journalist 2**

Why are you standing?

## **Mal Meninga**

A number of reasons. I guess throughout my sporting career, I've had the, the urge to do community work. And I think I've, you know, really worked hard on that aspect, my 16 years in Canberra. And the thing about that is that I was, I guess, a public figure. And I was put on a podium where I was just a person out there, making sure that I was ummm...I'm buggered . I'm sorry.

## **Journalist 2**

Mal Meninga is leaving the studio. And he says that he can't do it.

## **Journalist 1**

Mal Meninga's political career has lasted less than 30 seconds.

## **Mick**

All right, so Lynne, I think there was so much important content in what you're talking about. And particularly you started with the idea of, you know, control when you're doing a media interview, controlling your environment, and you know, to use a sporting analogy or a life analogy, it's about thinking about first up controlling that which which we can control, and for me one of the most important things that you can control is knowing your subject matter. So you really need to know your content, you really need to know, inside and out, what it is that you're going to be talking about. So, if you're

going on radio to talk about your community group has published a new publication, or you've got a new website, or if there's an app that people can access who are having trouble with fines. If you are the spokesperson for your organisation, your first responsibility is to make sure that you know the subject matter in and out. So usually your organisation will have had project documents or you might have had to put out a funding submission or you might have got funding to make your report or it was a report for your board. Yeah, I guess it's start by doing your homework, and really make sure that you understand it across its breadth. Now the challenge for people who are working in a sector is, the challenge is to imagine that you're someone who does not know your sector who does not know your project. And, that's a very difficult thing to do. So maybe you can use people in the office or colleagues or if the information is not confidential, that that good coffee shop friend, to ask you what to you might be the dumb questions or the simple questions or the fundamental questions that you're, you are so imbued in, and concepts that you don't even realise that the listener or the viewer, so first up, it's really about knowing your content, you can control that. And then, Lynne I know when we were talking about this workshop, off camera you talked about with previous organisations that you work with and previous clients, if there is a report, and distilling it. Really, work has to be done to distil it. And then even distilling it further into it as you said your your three key messages. So, there is a homework to be done and discipline really, in terms of understanding your brief, distilling it, and then distilling it further in your mind to really, what are the three key points as you said Lynne, that I want to get across. And because the more they answer it like going for a job interview, really, you know, there might have been key performance indicators that you needed to address, might be things about your career that you want to make sure that you get across. So it's really about knowing the brief as you say, distilling the message, and then having your three key points. And on the three key points are ... just one really practical thing when you are doing an interview if it's over the phone or so on, have those three key points typed out or written out in front of you. And you know, really make sure that you have them handy so that you don't get distracted. You may, even if you are across your brief, if you're doing an interview, and it's not your comfort zone, and you've got a 20 page document in front of you, it's easy to get distracted or to get thrown. So having those three key points in front of you, I think is really, really important. And also, they need to be, those points need to be as succinct as possible. Because if you're doing a radio or telly interview, you need to, not sorry, it's better to think in terms of can I distil this so if it becomes part of the news bulletin, that a 20msecond grab, you know, a 20 word grab, because you can make the most wonderful point but if it takes you five minutes, then as you know, Lynne from all your experience, it won't make it to the news. So really that this feeling this feeling this feeling is really important. The next challenge is in terms of controlling what you can control is I, we, and it's a bit of a mercenary term in the media Lynne, but we talk about the people we interview is talent. Now who is the best talent? What talent have you got for us? He she or he good talent. And by that for radio, it means someone who can speak well, who was articulate, who is engaging, who can have a conversation in his across her or his brief. For someone for TV, all of the things for radio, but someone who's comfortable in that environment, and sometimes organisations can face a challenge that well, normally it would have been this person who we put forward to talk about this project. Maybe they're not good talent, maybe they are really uncomfortable with doing radio or TV. So there's really in terms of things you can control. Do I know my brief? And have we worked out the best person to put forward, so I think those things that

you're saying about what we can control, and then moving into controlling your environment Lynne, I think they're very very important.

## **Lynne**

Yeah, absolutely Mick and it was a good point to call it you know, a job interview because it is in lots of ways, I suppose, or an exam in another context. And also, it is a real trap to take in sheets and sheets and sheets of preparation because there is nothing worse than somebody sitting in a radio interview or even worse still on television, flipping through stuff and trying find to find that thing and think and because you're already distracting yourself with your effort to find the right page, as opposed to communicating. And that's the key thing. When you're on on air, whatever shape that takes, there should be nothing that distracts between you and the audience. The person in front of you, the presenter, is the conduit, but the person you're speaking to is at the other end of that device. It's the person listening or watching. So you got to think about them all the time, and anything that comes between you and them. And that includes sheets of paper or being distracted by your environment in any way is, is off putting and is a disservice to your audience. So you've got to think that, you know, I'm going to deal with anything that might come between me and my audience, and get it out of the way. And I also think that some people imagine that distilling their message down, down down to you know, three core sentences is somehow doing a disservice to the content, that people think that it is reducing it to a dumb level or not taking account of the important complexity and nuance in a story. And to an extent that's true. There will always be, you know, mountains of material that sit behind key messages. But if you can stand behind your three key messages with your hand on your heart and say, This is absolutely what it is, we are trying to say, there is nothing dumb or silly or in any way foolish or reduced about that it's just a way in. So I think overcome any sensibility that you might have, that you are dumbing the message down, you're not. You're giving people a way in to your message and into your understanding, and I think then you'll, you'll realise that that distillation process is both really important for your audience, but also really important for you in validating what it is you've done, and the work that your team has undertaken, that you can encapsulate it in a very tight phrase. And somebody said, you know, and I only heard this recently, but I completely loved the the concept, The simplicity on the other side of complexity. So once you've been through the massive complexity of a hard piece of work, and you come out the other end, and you know, it's so well, and we all we've all had, you know, teachers or people in our world, who have this capacity to make the extraordinarily complex, really accessible. And that is a true gift. But we can all make an effort to try and get there, which is about you know, understanding so completely what it is that you've done, that you can draw it down to a very distilled communication, then I think you're on the path to drawing a lot of people along with you. Mick I think we're going to have to draw a halt there because we are testing the patience, of our audience, but we've learned a lot. So thank you so much for giving us this Cook's tour of mainstream media and some of the ways in which we can best prepare people to communicate. So if you were to give me three key messages of what people need to take away from today, what would they be Mick?

## **Mick**

Step one. Pause and look and see what media options are out there. They are multitudinous and you might initially feel overwhelmed, but the more you look, the more you will see. And you will be

encouraged to chase what is the best option for you? Because if what your organisation is doing important, the better the media option, the more likely there is a getting an important message out. So step one, have a look around and see what's out there. Step two. When you're thinking about getting your media message out there, start by asking yourself, why am I excited about this? Because what has excited you, is hopefully what will engage the listener or the viewer. So if you, if you've come up with something important, you're really excited because it will help a particular group of people, then harness that excitement. You know, really, really harness that excitement. Step three, even though we're talking about mainstream media, also remember the role of social media. So if you have social media channels use them. If you are able to get coverage in the Herald Sun or The Age or Lawyers Weekly or the Law Institute Journal or you're on telly or wherever then make sure to use your social media to let other people know about your story. Use social media to amplify it. Because you're achieving what you want to, one, you're achieving what you want to do, which is getting your message out there. And two, the media outlet that has published your story, your project, will really appreciate you helping to raise their profile, so ironically Lynne I'm finishing with social media, but they they are my: one, have a look what's around, two, find your excitement. And three, don't forget the role of social media.

## **Lynne**

Okay, I'm going to give his final three two, which are about taking control of your environment and asking as many questions as you need to, and feel no fear in doing that, because I think sometimes it can feel a bit daunting to push back on media. You want them to want your story. And you're inclined to say yes, but first find out what exactly you're buying into. You can do that in a very polite and respectful way. But it gives you a sense of control, to get your three key messages boiled down, and test them with people and make sure that they are absolutely what you want an audience, when they close their eyes after your conversation, to take away. And three, find the language and the passion. And I think you know, this goes to one of your points too, about why this is important, because that passion will come through, you know, and choose the language that fits that whether or not that's analogies or what else is happening in the world at the moment that you can tie it into, but find a way to connect that in terms that people find accessible and easy. And you're on a winner. So Mick, thank you so much indeed, that's been a blast making our First Better info session as as a Zoom experience, and I look forward to seeing you in the flesh again soon.

## **Mick**

And thank you very much Lynne, and thanks everyone, for dropping in and, and during this typical time, we hope that this helps, and all the very, very best.