

Handy Hints for Taking Photographs **Carmel Shute, City of Port Phillip**

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

- A good picture communicates the message of your media release/story
- Makes it more likely your story will get up
- Makes it more likely to get a good position in the publication
- Makes people more likely to read the printed story – the eye lights on the photo first
- Adds to the profile of your organisation or club
- Scores brownie points with the subjects (and management)

Conception

- Come up with a good idea appropriate to story
 - E.g. if the subject is the new playground, organise for kids to be in pic (playground equipment by itself pretty boring)
 - E.g. opening of community housing, organise new tenant
 - E.g. to promote meals on wheels, organise pic of client or client and delivery person
- Nearly always have a person or persons in it – but not too many (unless your event attracts huge numbers and that's the story)
- Come up with appropriate location + talent
- Props – do you need props? e.g. Aboriginal flag for Sorry Day and NAIDOC Week; Rainbow Flag for Pride March;
- What else do you need to organise? (e.g. beach cleaner in background; cherry picker in park; access to location/building/road)
- If the pics are at presentation ceremony, think of building photo ops into presentation

Pitching to publications

- Build discussion of photo ops into media briefings
- And/or ring with ideas
- Ring with breaking news
- Offer to set up photo ops
- Don't overuse same personalities eg mayor, councillor, CEO, or local polities
- Use community members where possible
- Offer to set up different photo ops for different publications (especially locals) – consecutive photo ops can work e.g. Leader at 9.30; The Weekly at 10.
- Take account of hours of photographers
- Do they only take pics only 9.30am-5pm, Monday-Friday?
- What about night-time and weekend arrangements?
- Offer to provide pics out-of-hours
- Do they favour big or small pics? Look at format (e.g. Except for front page and features, *Emerald Hill Weekly* pics are usually smaller than *Port Phillip Leader's*)

- If small, use close-ups, waist or chest up shots

No Noes

- Cheque hand-overs (even if big)
- Photos of certificates being presented
- Someone pointing at building
- Backs of heads
- Anyone talking at a lectern
- People's backs
- Mayor in rubbish bin

What makes a good pic

- New angle
- Tells a little story
- Freshness
- Human interest
- Eye-grabbing/engaging
- Action (if appropriate)
- Fun or quirky (if appropriate)
- Drama (if appropriate)

Camera

- Use a digital camera
- Make sure you have space on memory card + spare battery
- Make sure you save and file them properly
- Save in suitable dpi (usually 300) and size (usually at least 1 mg) and format (usually jpeg not tifs, unless you want extremely high resolution (e.g. for cover of publication))

Photo shoots with media

- Only attend major shoots?
- If there, assist photographer(s) as requested
- Don't be too bossy – just helpful
- Help organise talent, if necessary
- If more photographers all want different shots, (gently) establish an order
- Learn from the photographers – you can learn a lot from attending a photoshoot and seeing what pics they take then checking what pics make it into the paper

Be Fellini at your own photoshoots

- Direct people as to where they should be and how they should behave
- Be up close to subject
- Be prepared
- Get to the front of event (if necessary), climb up etc
- Take LOTS of photos
- Check photos to make sure you've got what you want
- If you have to take mayor, councillors or polities, make sure you take some without
- Avoid people standing around looking bored at functions
- Don't have too many people in pic

- Mostly, people should look animated
- Closer is better
- Allow subject to fill the frame
- But if you're shooting cricket match you can draw back
- Avoid cluttered/busy backgrounds if person is the focus. (Otherwise, use a really low aperture i.e. F4 or F2.8)
- Be aware of what's behind people – you don't want antennae appearing out of mayor's head
- Remember to take the names of people in the photographs unless you already know them
- When photographing people, camera should normally be same level as heads
- Look subject(s) in eye
- Subject doesn't always have to face camera
- Use vertical + angled shots (as well as horizontal)
- Have a strong centre of interest
- But think about putting subject to the side
- Try to avoid overly formal shots
- With strangers who are nervous, tell them you're doing a light test to get them to relax
- Generally, feet not needed in shot but don't cut people off at the knees
- No backs of heads
- Generally, people should be coming towards not going away from camera

Tips for pics of kiddies

- Crouch down for children unless you want to accentuate their smallness
- Be quick
- Make sure permissions are organised beforehand

Light

- Try to avoid strong sun in outdoor shoots - 10-4, especially over summer
- No alternative? Find area that is of even light
- Early morning/late afternoon fabulous for landscape shots
- Don't shoot into the sun/bright lights unless you have technical knowhow
- If sun is directly behind, people's faces can appear flat
- Sun is best on the side
- Try to use natural light inside (warmer)
- Photographing people with dark skins almost impossible in bright light unless backlit.

Pitching to other publications

- Offer story + pic to publications e.g. ethnic, gay, indigenous, local government, engineering, seniors', human services
- Make a practice of looking at the photos in every publication you read

Shooting for Websites

- Know what format (portrait or landscape) you're shooting for
- Pics are lower resolution