

A GUIDE TO WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE IN MEDIA

WHAT TO CONSIDER

Every time we tell our story - there is an impact.



This guide aims to provide organisations with a framework for ethically and responsibly working with people with lived/living experience of climate impacts and / or structural disadvantages in media contexts. These guidelines can help organisations to support and advocate for people and their stories to be treated with respect and dignity. You can ensure stories are shared in a way that is beneficial to the person sharing it and that the process and outcome align with their experiences and values.

"Don't use us for your own purposes"

What to Consider:

Purpose and Impact:

- Clearly define your purpose of using personal stories in media.
- Understand the potential impact on the people involved and the wider community.

Ethical Considerations:

- Respect the individual's privacy, confidentiality, and autonomy.
- Avoid use of stories for exploitative or sensational purposes.

Trauma-Informed Practices:

- Be mindful of the emotional impact as well as topics that could activate distress / trigger the person.
- Ask the person what support and resources they need throughout the process and provide access to those things. Check back in.
- Those impacted by the changing climate are often managing many challenges you may not be aware of.

Informed and Continuous Consent:

- Obtain clear and informed consent from the individual before, during, and after the media engagement.
- Be clear that consent can be withdrawn at any time.

Review and Feedback:

- Provide opportunities to review content and provide feedback on the final product before publication.
- Respect their input and make necessary adjustments.

Remuneration:

- Compensate individuals fairly for their time, expertise, and the use of their story.
- Consider factors such as the scope of the project, the individual's expertise, and industry standard rates of pay.

Training and Support:

- Consider developing training to prepare people with lived experience of climate change impacts for media interactions.
- Offer ongoing support, including debriefing if needed, to address any emotional impact from the engagement.



MEDIA AND NARRATIVE

MEDIA PROCESS



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The following provides a framework for clear communication, informed consent, and ongoing support, ultimately helping to protect the well-being of the people you work with and ensuring that their experiences are represented ethically and responsibly.

Ultimately, a trauma-informed approach when working with people and communities who experience the impacts of climate change is respectful, it minimises risk of causing harm and it is more likely to result in beneficial outcomes for all involved.

Media Process

Initial Briefing:

- Clearly communicate the purpose of the project and the expected outcomes.
- Discuss the person's role and the potential benefits and risks involved.

Consent and Agreement:

- Make sure it is clear that consent can be withdrawn at any point.
- Respect the individual's privacy, confidentiality, and autonomy.

Timelines

- Factor in the need for timeline flexibility and fluctuations in capacity. Provide contingency plans and alternatives should a last minute change be needed.

Story Development:

- People need a safe and supportive space to share their story.
- Respect the pace and comfort level of people with lived experience of the climate change impacts.

Review and Feedback:

- Provide opportunities for people to review and give feedback on the story, especially direct quotes.

Media Engagement:

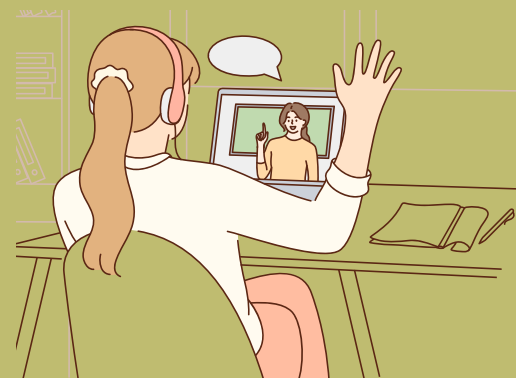
- Prepare people for media interactions, including potential questions and challenges. Vet journalists and be explicit with them.
- Offer support and guidance throughout the process.

Permissions:

- Seek permission for all forms of use of a person's story and images in all formats, including use in social media

Post-Media Debriefing:

- Provide a space for the individual to reflect on their experience and address any emotional needs.



MEDIA AND NARRATIVE

STORIES: LIVED EXPERIENCE IN MEDIA

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How You Tell Our Stories Can Help or Harm

He wanted something from me

"I went to do a live radio interview in the studio... Being an organisation that worked in, you know, the climate survivor space. He, of course, asked me about my story, and he asked me three consecutive questions about losing my home. I can't remember what they were, but I remember the last one is like he did this, hand gesturing, 'but what did it feel like?' I really had to dig deep to try and even consider answering that.

I think I took a somewhat superficial approach to that answer, because I'd already tried to address it in the first two questions, and I knew that he just wanted to extract something from me that would benefit him in his audience, something moving, something controversial, something I had that he wanted. It felt really, uh, disgusting. And after that, I went and had a beer, and I just cried"



We had to beg to look at the draft

"We had to beg for them to give us the draft to proof read so we could ensure it was correct - and when it was published it still wasn't correct.

They misgendered one of us in the title and in the captions, undermining the story and triggering trauma.

It was way more work that we expected to not only prepare for the interview but then rectify and advocate for the corrections.

We did all this work cos we couldn't say it all in the interview - but then it wasn't even used in the article."

Why would he do that on live radio?

*"I could have called him out, been like, given you've asked that twice already, like, What do you want? Like, a live radio... It was good learning, organisationally and personally, after that, we went through it a bunch of times - what to do in that situation. And obviously just bridge away from it. But also, f**k that. I wanted to, now I want to call him out on it and... just ask him, 'What, why would he do that on live radio?'"*



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How We Tell Our Stories Can Help or Harm

The Effect of the Media

*"What am I trying to say? I'm trying to say that my key feeling after, or [the] effect on me of doing all of that media and working with climate survivor organisations, has been that I have really, deeply entrenched my own trauma, and I believe I've made it heaps worse. And so I feel like an obligation now to let people know to be careful. Be really f***ing careful. Because I thought for years it was empowering and it was important, and people were listening. But then I realised over the years that I would cry probably every time I started doing media and a lot afterwards"*

Intentions not Shared

I've worked with media as part of my advocacy around disability justice. I've been part of written articles as well as radio and television interviews about issues that impact people with my condition, as well as disability in general. I've done mostly live interviews, but was asked to be part of an article which was pre-recorded at my home. When the article was on the news I was shocked as the interviews surrounding ours and the editing misrepresented and trivialised our experiences. The journalist didn't tell us of his plans, his angle for the news feature and I felt betrayed. I didn't do any more media advocacy for about a year after that

Damage by the Media

"I couldn't believe that I'd never realised how much damage I've done to myself; I just didn't clock it. I didn't, and I don't know if I regret it now, but I would have been more careful about what types of media I did, because I just thought any media is good media. 'I don't care. I'm strong. I've got this. I've been doing it for ages', and then incrementally, it wore me down, and I wasn't I wasn't strong anymore... That's really what I want to tell other people with lived experience."

A Great Experience

When we were interviewed, I was very nervous, but the journalist was also disabled so I didn't have to explain all the barriers I have to participate. I wish everyone was that aware. She was flexible when I had to change times without any judgement. She communicated openly throughout the process of interviewing, photographs, writing and publishing.

Having had bad experiences before, I asked if we could see the article before it was published. Not only were we able to read the finished article before it was published, the journalist also sent us our quotes to make sure we were happy with how we were represented. It was such a good experience and helped me learn to ask for what I need.

MEDIA AND NARRATIVE

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS & MESSAGING

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Additional Considerations:

Alternative Storytelling:

- Explore alternative storytelling formats, such as composites or anonymous narratives, to protect privacy and reduce emotional impact. People may be more comfortable answering questions in writing rather than speaking. Some may prefer to meet online, others in person, others by email.

Climate Justice Narrative:

- Integrate climate justice perspectives into the storytelling process, highlighting the intersection of lived experiences, racial, economic and disability justice and climate issues.

Organisational Responsibility:

- Ensure that the organisation has the necessary resources and expertise to support people within the media context and cycle.
- Regularly review and update policies and procedures to ensure ethical and responsible practices.

Messaging and Language

There are many publications on messaging - we seek to point to a couple of issues to be mindful of in relation to lived experience.

- Use strengths-based language where possible
 - Survivors not victims
 - Disproportionately impacted not vulnerable
- Don't use language that excludes the experience of many
 - Dangerous not unliveable* (these regions will remain populated even as conditions worsen)
- Don't compare disasters - either past or future - in a way that undermines or minimises the experiences of those impacted already
- Be aware of language that privileges the impacts to the upper and middle classes - eg focusing on impacts to holidays and lifestyles - unless that is a specific focus of the campaign.
- Impacted communities are very tired of the words resilience and 'recovery journey' - these words have often been poorly used to put the onus back on individuals in spite of the real causes of the problems. Be guided by the language they use themselves.
- Be mindful that as humans we respond very differently to stories about people 'like us' and people who are 'other'. Our biases can lead to us preference certain narratives and certain people when building stories about struggle, trauma, disasters and recovery. Avoid reinforcing stereotypes wherever possible.

Borrowed from: Joyner, S., Dodds, J., Gresham, B., & McCallum, K. (2023-2024). *Lived Experience Guide to Climate Campaigning Version 1.0. Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, Psychology for a Safe Climate, CANA.*



MEDIA AND NARRATIVE IMAGERY DOS AND DONTs

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Imagery guidelines from people with lived experience

Imagery is a powerful tool for the climate justice movement and others. While imagery can be effective in attracting attention and support it can also create fear, despair and cause the viewer to reject or turn away from the message.

For people with lived experience of climate impacts or marginalisation - or even those who watch climate impacts with growing eco-grief and sadness - some imagery can be triggering, leading to feelings of despair, anger, anxiety or distress. Imagery can also exclude (people and situations) through the limited choice of subjects and create problematic bias (eg only showing happy people at a beach during a heatwave).

These are recommendations based on the experiences of survivors, impacted people and others who have been deeply affected by climate disasters. We understand in some circumstances these images serve a purpose.

Don't:

- Don't show raging out-of-control bushfires
- Don't show homes burning - be aware of not sharing news articles that frequently show these images during ongoing fires
- Don't show destroyed homes without the express permission of the property owner (e.g. in a story the person has fully consented to appearing in).
- Don't show injured or dead animals
- If possible don't use exclusively monocultural images.

Try to:

- Show images of people organising in response to disasters and helping each other
- Show emergency personnel responding to emergencies
- Show diversity of cultures, geographies, ages, genders and lifestyles
- Show a damaged home if you have the express permission of the property owner and it is intrinsic to telling a story/illustrating a campaign

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