

'Talking to Decision Makers' Toolkit

The 'Talking to Decision Makers' Toolkit aims to help broadcasters talk to decision makers on issues affecting your community.

Ethnic and multicultural community radio provides a great opportunity for building relationships between your community and politicians and developing dialogue on issues like cultural diversity, racism, migration, and language maintenance. You can offer politicians a chance to communicate with your ethnic community, and you can ask politicians to demonstrate their support for ethnic community radio.



This toolkit was originally prepared by the NEMBC for the 2013 Federal Election, in conjunction with our *Leadership Media Manual*, to help ethnic and multicultural broadcasters plan and prepare programs about the federal election. We welcome your input and feedback to help develop this toolkit.

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3. Interview Planning and Preparation

This section takes you through the process of securing, researching, preparing and conducting in-depth political interviews.

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This section guides you through your responsibilities as a broadcaster in terms of ethics, media law, and the rules pertaining to political material and political advertising.

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This section shows you how to take your program further by promoting it on social media.



1. Ideas for Broadcasters

Firstly, recognise your strengths. As an ethnic and multicultural broadcaster, you are the most experienced person to be talking about multicultural community radio and migrant issues. You already know what to say and you can speak from the *heart*. Politicians really like it when they hear real stories by real people and that is what community radio is all about.

Program ideas

Here are some program ideas to improve on the many things you already know.

There are many different types of program you can prepare, each with their own advantages and challenges.

One-on-one interview with a politician

There are two types of interviews you can prepare for a politician, a hard interview or a soft interview.

'Hard' interview

In a 'hard' interview you want the politician to answer direct questions about their parties' policies and agendas, and about community issues. You need to do your research and prepare questions you think your audience and community want answered. In this type of interview you really need to pay attention to what they are saying and notice if they are not giving a clear response. If they are not answering a question, you should try asking them again so your audience has an answer. You need to be confident and direct in your approach, but don't be rude or impolite. If a member of the community is running for office, the public has a right to know what they will do if they are elected.

'Soft' interview

In a 'soft' interview you might want to take a more relaxed approach and focus on the personal side of the politician. You could ask them about the things they care about and why they got into politics, or you can ask about their personal life and achievements. This type of interview can be very interesting for the listener and give them a different understanding of the person. But remember, it is an election interview, so don't be afraid to ask a few tough questions.

Group interview

Invite a group of people from the community and the politician so that you are able to get a diverse range of views. Think about any tricky topics that might come up and how you will manage it if the conversation turns into an argument. You should have questions to help guide the conversation. Also, don't be afraid to interrupt if the conversation starts to go off topic. You can interrupt politely by saying things like: 'That's an interesting point, we can talk about that later but let's stay on this topic ...'



Roundtable discussion

If political leaders do not come on your show then start your own dialogue. Have a round table discussion with a group of community leaders. The same rules apply for a group interview with a politician; plan how you will manage the conversation.

Pre-recorded program with vox pops

You can create a magazine style pre-recorded program by interviewing people from your own community about the issues that are important to them. Record some vox-pops (mini-interviews with people from your community/ or on the street) and mix these with music in your language and your own reporting on politics.

Talkback segment

Managing talkback can be a little bit tricky; talk to your station about their talkback policy and make sure you have one or two other people to help you with answering the telephones. All talkback shows 'screen' their callers, this means they answer the phone, find out what they want to talk about, and then tell the presenter who is on the line and what the issue is. In this way, the presenter knows what the topic will be and is prepared to ask relevant questions to the caller.

Report on ethnic community broadcasting

Even if you don't want political discussion to be a main feature in your program, you can talk about funding for ethnic community broadcasting. You can report on the policies and commitments that different political parties have announced, or encourage listeners to write to politicians asking for them to support ethnic community broadcasting.

Other ideas

There are also a number of things you can do outside of your program:

- Invite candidates and political leaders to tour your station.
- Ask your listeners and community leaders to contact local candidates explain the importance of ethnic community radio and seek their support.
- Write to political parties and political leaders.
- Radio stations can become involved by organising forums and meetings.

2. Background Information

For background information on why ethnic and multicultural broadcasting is important, visit www.nembc.org.au > Advocacy > Some Basic Facts

Need to know how to run a media campaign? Download our detailed Leadership Media Manual and see page 21 for how to run a media campaign.



3. Interview Planning and Preparation

Securing Interviews

- Don't be shy to ask for an interview. Candidates like the opportunity to gain media coverage, and as a community radio broadcaster you have an audience they can reach.
- Find out who is running in your local area. The *Tallyroom* is a useful website that lets you search by electorate: <http://www.tallyroom.com.au/>. If you do not know your electorate, you can look it up on the Australian Electoral Commission website: <http://apps.aec.gov.au/esearch/Default.aspx>
- Send them an email or letter, and definitely follow it up with a phone call. Don't be deterred, you will probably be put in contact with their media and communications officer who will help you organise the interview. Let them (or their staff) know you are a broadcaster and which station and program you are from. Also, let them know your reach: how many people you speak to in your community, how many people you broadcast to and how far your signal reaches. Highlight the benefits of being on your show – you might have a large reach, or you might have smaller audience but in a marginal area, or in an electorate where multicultural issues are a deciding topic.
- The politician or their media officer will probably want to know what sort of program you present, how long the interview will go for, would it be a live or pre-recorded interview and what you will be talking about. Make sure you have this information ready to give them. Don't deceive them by telling them you are doing a 'soft' program when you really mean to ask some very tough questions.
- If they ask for a list of questions, give them a few general dot points on the topics you would like to talk about, but don't feel pressured to give them a detailed list with the exact wording. Providing the exact questions will ruin some of the spontaneity of the interview and will not be as interesting for your listeners.
- If the politician cannot come into the studio to be interviewed, consider booking a phone interview. If you are nervous about a face-to-face interview, organise a pre-recorded interview so there is less pressure. A pre-recorded program can be a good choice.

Do Your Research

- Look into which politicians are in your area and find out what they like: do they play sport, do they have children, what is their background, are they married to someone from an ethnic background? This will allow for some small talk on the program and for a 'softer' interview. It also helps you to develop your discussion and questions.
- Look at the big election issues and the issues that face the ethnic community: refugees and migration, the environment, languages in schools, education, employment, foreign aid etc.
- Look at the Background Information section of this Toolkit.



Prepare

- Create your own fact sheet -- with the key points and questions you want to cover in the interview.
- Develop your questions and try them on friends.
- Think about responses that the political leaders may give and prepare your response. Make sure they stay on track and answer your questions. Politicians tend to use the same slogans over and over again to get out of giving direct answers, so try and keep them on topic and to the point.
- Listen to other radio or TV interviews about the election. Develop your own style.
- Read the newspapers and online news websites in the lead up to your interview so you are up-to-date on the issues; especially on the day of the interview. Something topical that has happened that week might provide a good lead to start your program.
- Take note of what the political leader you will interview has said in other recent interviews; search for them in newspapers, radio and the internet, even Twitter. Think about what they are *not* saying - this could lead to some interesting questions!

Practice

- Repeat your key messages and questions so you know your main goal for the interview.
- Practice the interview with a friend or colleague. Get your friend to divert from the question and try to bring them back on track.

During the interview

- Before the interview, make sure you have someone to meet the political leader. When they arrive, this is good manners and it creates a good impression. They will be more likely to come back on the show if you are respectful. If they are phoning in, let them know how long you'll have them on hold and remind them of the name of the show, station and presenters before you put them on hold and then bring them on air. This will help put them at ease.
- During the interview, listen carefully so you can respond.
- Ask clarifying questions – if you don't understand it then your audience probably will not understand either.
- Do not be afraid to take it easy; 'small talk' can bring out some interesting responses and it is, after all, community radio and it can go slow and steady.
- If the politician is not answering your question you can interrupt and say something like: 'That's an interesting point, but my question was...'
- If the politicians use general responses and you feel they are diverting from the questions because they are saying:
'I don't have all the details, but what I know is ...'

Invite them back on air to explain it later. Ask for the details to be sent to you and you will continue to report on it ...

If they say things like 'That is indeed important, but what's even more important is...'

Bring them back on track and try and get them to answer your question.

If they try to answer a question by criticising an opposition party's policy you can say:

'Yes, but we would like to know what your party's policy (or your opinion) is on this matter'



Who to Invite

All political parties need to be invited. Once you have had one political candidate on your program, that can be an incentive for other candidates so they get the same coverage. An independent might want more media opportunities and be the first to come on your program. Afterwards you can follow up with other candidates, letting them know which other candidates you have invited or already had as guests. The important thing is that you give each candidate an opportunity to appear on your show or as a part of your programming. If you are having a roundtable discussion, tell the politicians who else you have invited and brief them on the issues you will be discussing.

4. Election Do's and Don'ts

Election Do's and Don'ts

There are a few things to be aware of when covering elections, on top of your ordinary responsibilities as a broadcaster.

Conflict of Interest

Your listeners have the right to know if you're a member of a political party when you are covering political issues. You should declare to your listeners that you are a member and allow them to make up their own minds about whether you have covered the issue fairly or not. The same applies to any issues that you might have a personal interest in: you should always declare to listeners any conflict of interest.

For example, if you are a member of the Teachers' Union and you are covering a teachers' strike, you should let them know. Or, if you are involved in an inquiry into police racism and you are talking about it on your show, you should let your audience know that you are involved in the inquiry.

Code of Ethics, Defamation and Media Law

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance has a very good code of ethics that you should read so that you know what your obligations are to your audience and your community as a broadcaster:
<http://www.alliance.org.au/code-of-ethics.html>

You should also read up your station's Media Law handbook in preparation for the election coverage. Make sure you understand defamation law and do not be scared to ask your station management for help in understanding it. People have strong emotions and feelings about politics and you need to be careful about what you say about people on air.

For example, you can't say: 'Senator Bloggs is an incompetent, adulterating, nincompoop...' (even if you have evidence that he is, it is best not to make these sort of statements).

It's better to focus on the issues and not the person. You can say: 'The policy that Senator Bloggs supports will be terrible for my local community because...'

The Australian Communication and Media Authority has strict rules about how and what to broadcast during an election period; these rules are law so all broadcasters need to make sure they



do not break any of them. These rules are in place to make sure coverage of the election is fair and balanced.

The following instructions regarding election coverage are from the CBAA website:

Political Material

- The station may broadcast political content (news, statements, commentary or discussion) during the entire election period provided that 'the broadcaster give reasonable opportunities for the broadcasting of election matter to all political parties contesting the election...'
- Be sure that all broadcast material is logged. Logging is a licence condition. The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is entitled to request audio logs/ details of any political or current affairs material that is broadcast on your station.

Political Advertising

- **The broadcast of political advertising must cease three days prior to the polling day.** This applies to state and federal elections. If the election is to take place on a Saturday, advertising must cease at the end of the Wednesday and only re-commence after the polls are closed on Saturday.
- The station must announce the details of the party that has authorised and sponsored the political advertisement.
- The political advertisement must be 'tagged' eg. 'This political announcement was sponsored and authorised by XXX party'.
- If a station broadcasts the political advertising of a political party, the opportunity of advertising must be available to competing political parties.

For more information please see:

[ACMA fact sheet covering the broadcasting and communication of political and election matter \(pdf\)](#)



5. Social Media

Social media can help you expand the reach of your program, and engage your community more deeply in your program. Use social media and your community networks to advertise any special programming you are doing, both before it goes to air and afterwards.

You can extend the longevity of your program beyond your live audio broadcast by promoting your show using photos, text, video and podcasts on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. These websites are free to sign up and many people will check social media for news, more often than they look at other news sources.

- Tell your Twitter or Facebook followers when you will be having guests on your show. You can invite your followers to submit questions for your guests and use one guest question in each interview.
- Follow local politicians and community groups on Twitter. When you mention any guests, make sure you tag them with the @ function. Also use popular hashtags like #auspol (Australian politics) or any other tags that are trending.
- During the interview, have someone take photos and upload these to social media.
- While on air, encourage listeners to follow your Facebook and Twitter pages and comment or message.
- If your show is podcasted, share the link via your social media pages.
- Encourage discussion of community issues on social media, but you will need to monitor communications to ensure people are being respectful and not defaming anyone. Delete any messages that are defamatory or offensive to a 'reasonable' person.
- Between shows, you can keep conversations going on social media to encourage followers to be more engaged with your program and give your audience a sense that you're active even when you're off air – as well as a reminder to tune in when you're on air.
- See our *Leadership Media Manual* for more tips.

