

Tips for responding to the media

Once you've established your LDAT and begun your project, the local media may approach members of your team (or your media spokesperson if you have one) to clarify elements of your project, or get a comment or quote.

These questions might be about the organisations that make up your LDAT, the project/s being undertaken by your LDAT, or for instance looking for information related to another alcohol or other drug related (AOD) issue in your community.

Gather information

Unless you feel really comfortable and prepared on the issue, use this initial enquiry to gather information, not to respond. Make a note of the:

- journalist's name;
- journalist's telephone number/email;
- name of the newspaper/radio/TV station they represent;
- subject of enquiry;
- information they're asking you to provide; and
- their deadline.

You may need to call them back

If your LDAT doesn't already have a response to the issue, explain to the journalist that you'll need to consider their enquiry and that you will call them back.

Whether or not you decide to go 'on the record' with a response, ensure that you get back in touch with the journalist either way (as a courtesy).

If you can't or don't want to comment, consider referring the journalist or media outlet to another organisation.

What to do

1. Do be prepared – especially if it's a live interview. Put together two or three key messages you'd like to get across, including promotion of your LDAT. If it's a print or pre-recorded interview, ask to repeat/reword/re-record your point if you're not happy with what you said the first time around. (Download the ['New LDAT announcement' media release template](#) for examples of key messages you might like to use when publicising the formation of your LDAT.)
2. Only talk in facts – don't make up anything.

3. Be clear in which capacity you are speaking. For instance, on behalf of your LDAT, as an employee of your organisation, as an AOD expert (or not), or as a private citizen.
4. Be brief and to the point – don't waffle. Remember, different media formats will use a greater or lesser amount of what you have to say. (See our accompanying "[Engaging the media](#)" video series for more on this.)
5. If you don't know something, say so. Ask for time to check facts or figures if required.
6. Speak plainly, don't use jargon or expect the journalist to have detailed knowledge of the issue or the AOD sector. Also be really aware of not stigmatising people with your use of language.
7. Be prepared to answer follow up questions.

What not to do

"I told the journalist
it was off the record ..."

1. Don't say anything you don't want to see on the front page of a major newspaper or on a current affairs show.
2. Don't sensationalise, comment on gossip, or speculate.
3. Don't say 'no comment' – if you don't want to speak to a journalist, tell them you're not able to help them for this story.
4. Don't say something is 'off the record' – nothing is.
5. Don't make jokes, they can be taken out of context.
6. Be very careful what you say about other organisations or people.
7. Don't comment on legal cases, and be sensitive when talking about people harmed by alcohol and drug misuse.