

A guide on writing letters to the editor



Make your support for WA's Outback heard!

There's been overwhelming support from the local community for the Our Outback, Our Story campaign. But keeping WA's Outback great for future generations will depend in part on how visible your support is. So, please don't keep your opinions to yourself - let everyone know!

One of the best ways you can do this is to write a letter (which can be sent by email) to the editor of your local, state or national newspaper.

The 'Letters to the Editor' page is one of the most read pages in any newspaper and politicians use it to gauge public opinion on an issue. It's not a forum for hard facts of statistics (although if you have them that's great) – it's more about YOUR opinion and how you feel about an issue.

Creating a brighter future for WA's Outback is too important for us to stay silent, so please take five minutes to send your short Letter to the Editor today.

Thanks for making a difference!

Remember, we're here to help!

Please contact us anytime for assistance or advice by emailing info@outbackwa.org.au

Why is a letter important?

Letters to the Editor are one of the most widely read sections of a newspaper and reach a large audience. These letters often influence what topics the newspaper covers, and are widely read by politicians and their staff.

The newspaper only has limited space, so not all letters are published. However, the more letters received on a particular topic, the more likely they are to publish at least one of the letters on the topic.

So even if you don't get your letter published, you'll be adding to the volume of interest from the public in that issue that might influence the newspaper to publish other letters on the same topic.

Don't give up—your letter may have been the one that made the difference.

When should I write a letter?

If you see an article in the newspaper on this issue, read it carefully to see if it leaves out some important points about WA's Outback.

If an industry or government spokesperson in the article says something that you don't agree with and that you feel you can challenge or does not mention an important point, this is your chance to write a great letter to the editor.

At certain times in the campaign, we may also ask you and our other supporters to write a letter to the editor that relates to a particular part of the campaign – so that the newspaper's editor is overwhelmed by the volume of interest and should therefore publish lots of letters on the topic.

How should I write my letter?

Here are some tips on how to go about writing the best letter you can:

- **Keep it short.** Shorter letters (50-200 words) are more likely to be published. If your letter is too long and it still gets printed, a sub-editor is likely to lop off paragraphs, which may change the meaning of your letter or take out your most important points. It's better for you to do the lopping yourself before you send it.
- **Stick to one concise point.** You can't cover everything when you're writing about a complicated issue in 200 words. If you have more to say you can write another letter tomorrow. Lots of short letters over a period of time are better than one long letter.
- **Humour is good.** Include a funny line if you can, but avoid sarcasm.
- **Use short sentences.** This makes it easier for the reader to understand your point.
- **Keep your language plain and simple.** Only use long words if you need to and can't think of a suitable alternative.
- **Be factual** and highlight aspects of the issue that haven't been previously addressed.
- **Statistics often impress some editors**, so throw in some numbers or percentages if you have them handy, but make sure they are accurate. If you get them wrong, it undermines your message.
- **Be economical with your words.** Go over the draft of your letter and take anything out that is repetitive
- **Include your name and address and a daytime phone number.** Many newspapers will only publish a letter after verifying the author's contact information. When printed, the letter will usually only include your name and suburb. If you do wish to include any sensitive information, for example a personal story, you can ask that your name and address be withheld when the letter is printed – but you'll still need to provide these details in your letter.
- **Send letters to smaller newspapers.** Small newspapers are more likely to print your letter and the letter can then spark local community action.
- If possible, **get someone else to read the letter before you send it**, preferably someone with less knowledge of the subject than you. If they ask you to explain anything, you need to make your letter a bit clearer.
- And of course, **check the letter for typos**, spelling and grammar before you send.

Most news outlets prefer to receive letters by email or may have specific forms on their websites to send your letter. If you email your letter, type the letter into the body of the email and don't add it as an attachment. **Good luck - get out there and start writing!**

Who should I write to?

West Australian

The West Australian is the newspaper that has the most influence over the greatest number of our politicians, so they are a good target, particularly if you live in the Perth metropolitan area.

Guidelines: Include your full address and telephone number.

Post: Letters to the Editor, PO Box 1959, OSBORNE PARK DC WA 6916

Email: letters@wanews.com.au

The Australian

The Australian is our national newspaper so if you get a letter published here, it will be read all over the country.

Guidelines: Include your full address and telephone number.

Email: letters@theaustralian.com.au

Perth Now

Use the form to submit your letter at

<http://www.perthnow.com.au/news/opinion/letter-to-the-editor>

Your local newspaper

Your local community or regional newspaper is a great paper to write to, as you may spark local community engagement with the issue. In a regional area, your newspaper is likely to be very widely read, including by your local MP.

Regional areas:

There are numerous local papers across WA. You should be able to find your local paper's contact details on the following list <http://www.newspapers.com.au/WA/>

If you aren't sure which local newspaper to write to, please contact us for advice by emailing info@outbackwa.org.au

Your local newspaper

Metro areas:

Perth Suburban News publishes newspapers across the Perth metropolitan area. You can see which paper covers your local area at <http://www.perthsuburbannews.com.au/>

You can submit letters at the following web addresses:

Herald

<http://heraldonlinejournal.com/letters/>

Post

<http://www.postnewspapers.com.au/lettertotheeditor.php>

Voice

<http://perthvoiceinteractive.com/letters/>

Examiner

<http://www.yourlocalexaminer.com.au/contact/>

Echo

<http://echonewspaper.com.au/write-a-letter/>

Remember, we're here to help!

Please contact us anytime for assistance or advice by emailing info@outbackwa.org.au