

2026

State of the Press Release.

The rules to earning media coverage with press releases.

medianet.

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The press release is still the newsroom's top source.

The analysis of 7,850 press releases distributed through Medianet tells us what makes a successful press release.

Every few years someone declares the press release dead. The evidence says otherwise.

In Medianet's 2026 Australian Media Landscape Report, 86% of journalists said they use press releases as a story source. For the first time, releases overtook industry and professional contacts as the source journalists use most.

This report looks at what happens after a release is sent. Of the 7,850 press releases we analysed, 65.9% were picked up by the media.

The releases that did best had a genuine story and said why it mattered. Adding tension, conflict or a recognised name lifted pickup from 65.1% to 75.6%. Promotional releases were picked up 22 points less often. Releases reacting to a news moment or 'newsjacking' did best of all: 88.5%.

The stakes are rising. People increasingly ask AI tools about organisations and issues. Medianet's Opening the Black Box research found those tools draw mostly on what organisations publish, and the earned media they cite comes mostly from press releases.

At a glance

86%
of Australian journalists use press releases as a story source

65.9%
of press releases distributed through Medianet were picked up

88.5%
of releases offering commentary to a breaking news moment got pickup

75.6%
picked up when impact came with tension or a well-known name

> **A release that gets picked up does two jobs: it reaches readers, and it becomes a source AI can cite.**

Sources

Medianet press release distribution and Pickup Tracker data, 7,850 press releases, January to August 2026, excluding media alerts and invitations.
Medianet, **2026 Australian Media Landscape Report**, a survey of 803 Australian journalists, January 2026.
Medianet, **Opening the Black Box**, Phase 2, 11,127 AI citations coded by hand, May 2026.

Context What journalists want

Show you know their interests, make the story easy to understand, and use email.

The best way to earn a journalist's trust is to show you understand what they cover.

60% of journalists named it as the top factor, well ahead of fast responses (15%) and exclusives (14%)*.

How journalists receive press releases



Key numbers

97%
prefer story ideas and pitches by email

70% **
read less than a single paragraph of a pitch or press release before deciding whether to pursue the story

60%
prefer one follow-up

78%
say AI-generated pitches lower their trust in PR

What to do

- **Email the release**
- **Show you know their subject of interest**
- **Keep your pitch human and relevant**
- **Follow up once, no more**

Sources

*Medianet, **2026 Australian Media Landscape Report**, a survey of 803 Australian journalists, January 2026.
Medianet, **2023 Australian Media Landscape Report, PR Edition.

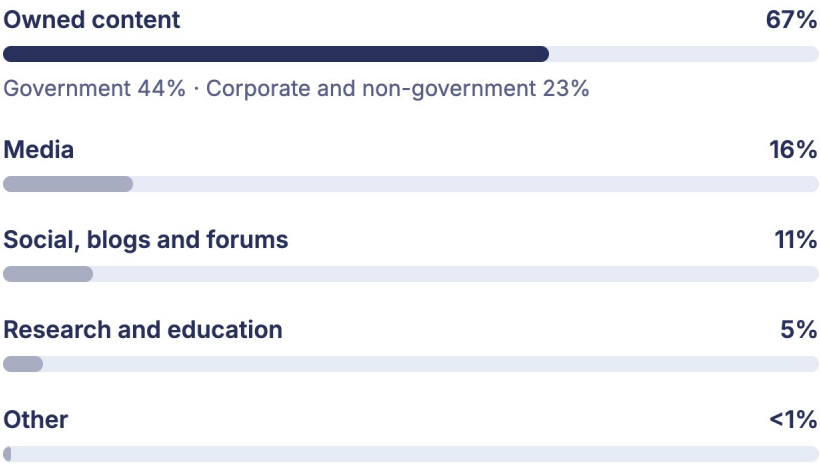
Context How AI reads what you publish

AI answers draw mostly on what organisations publish themselves.

67% of AI citations came from content organisations publish themselves.

The earned media AI did cite came mostly from press releases and smaller outlets. A release published on your own newsroom and on open sites becomes content AI can read and cite.

Where AI citations came from



The research covered four brands over two 14-day windows.

Key numbers

4%
of citations came from major national and metropolitan newspapers

16%
of answers still cited a campaign six months on

45%
of one brand's AI mentions repeated its website wording

What to do

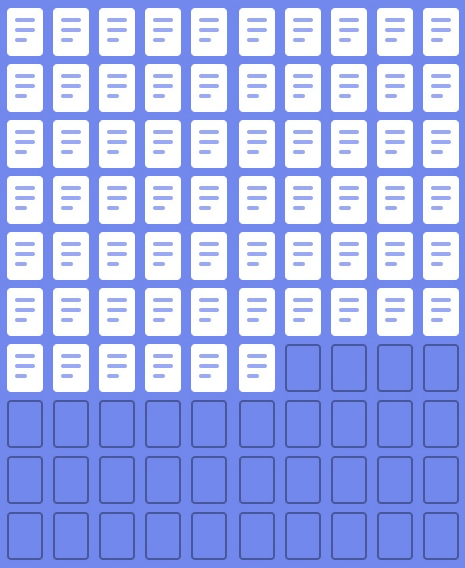
- **Publish every release on your own newsroom**
- **Make sure it also sits on open, crawlable sites**
- **Write the key line the way you want AI to repeat it**

Source

Medianet, **Opening the Black Box**, Phase 2: 11,127 citations from 1,357 answers across ChatGPT, Perplexity and Google AI Summary, coded by hand, May 2026.

65.9%

of the 7,850 press releases distributed through Medianet were picked up by the media.



What is a pickup? When a news outlet published the release itself, in close to the same wording. Syndicated releases across a network or stories created by a journalist from scratch are not counted. Medianet's Pickup Tracker identifies pickups based on keyword matching across around 2,000 Australian media websites.

The story

A genuine story

A genuine news story — **72.5%**

Written mainly to promote — **50.6%**

The story

The right news values

Impact plus tension or a well-known name — **75.6%**

Impact alone — **65.1%**

The writing

Lead with the news

Headline flags a risk or warning — **77.4%**

Headline announces a launch — **50.2%**

The writing

Quote early

First quote in the first 75 words — **72.4%**

First quote later — **64.2%**

The send

Off-peak timing

Sent before 6am or after 6pm — **76.5%**

Sent 9am to noon — **63.3%**

The send

React to the news

Reacting to a news moment — **88.5%**

Average for all press releases — **65.9%**

SECTION 1

What gets picked up

Why some press releases get published and others don't. It starts with the story itself.

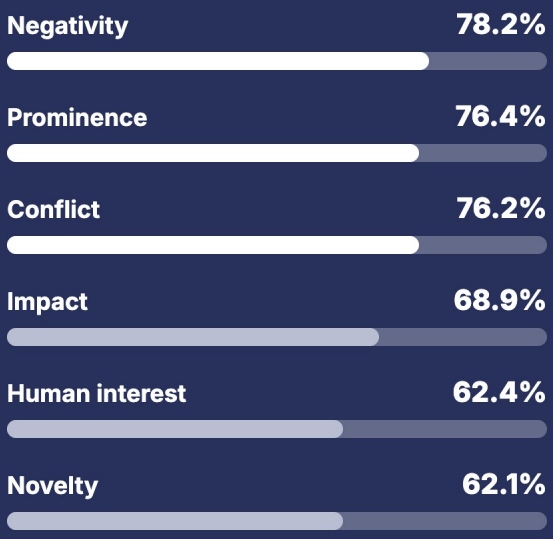
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Genuine news value wins

72.5% of releases with a genuine news story were picked up.

Releases with a real story beat promotional ones. The news values in the headline mattered too. Negativity, prominence and conflict led the way.

Share of releases picked up, by news value in the headline



Combining news values

Stacking Impact and Conflict, Negativity or Prominence increases pickup.

Releases with impact alone	Impact plus human interest or novelty	Impact plus conflict, negativity or prominence
65.1%	65.2%	75.6%

Impact and conflict

A costly and devastating policy failure – Australia now spends a record $1.1 billion a year locking up children

113 pickups

Impact, stated as a number

Unpaid super costs Australians $24.4bn over five years

199 pickups

What the news values mean

News values are what journalists and editors believe make a story newsworthy. We analysed the news values of a sample of 862 releases to tell you what tends to get the most attention.

Timeliness

88.5% picked up

A story tied to something happening now: a decision, an event, a breaking issue.

Look for: Why does this matter today?

> *"What the RBA rate decision could mean for consumer confidence"*

Measured as releases reacting to a news moment, across all press releases.

Negativity

78.2% picked up

Something going wrong: a cost, a risk, a decline or a warning.

Look for: Is something getting worse, or about to?

> *"More cases of the H5 bird flu confirmed: What it means for poultry and public health"*

Prominence

76.4% picked up

A well-known person, organisation or institution in the story.

Look for: Would most readers recognise the name?

> *"UNESCO says Australia must do more to protect the Reef as 'super El Niño' looms"*

Conflict

76.2% picked up

A dispute or challenge between people, groups or institutions.

Look for: Is someone pushing back, warning or disagreeing?

> *"PWDA warns new evidence shows Government is not ready for sweeping NDIS reforms"*

Impact

68.9% picked up

How much a story affects people: how many, how directly and how soon.

Look for: Who is affected, and by how much?

> *"Super funds with representative governance deliver $33 billion in extra value for Australians"*

Human interest

62.4% picked up

A personal or emotional story about real people.

Look for: Is there a person the reader can relate to?

> *"New Year, same struggle: Aussies' resolutions won't last past January"*

Novelty

62.1% picked up

Something new, unusual or a first.

Look for: Is this the first, the biggest or the strangest?

> *"Microsoft and ACTU sign landmark agreement on AI"*

Proximity

Not measured

News close to the audience: a local place, community or issue.

Look for: Is it happening near the people you want to reach?

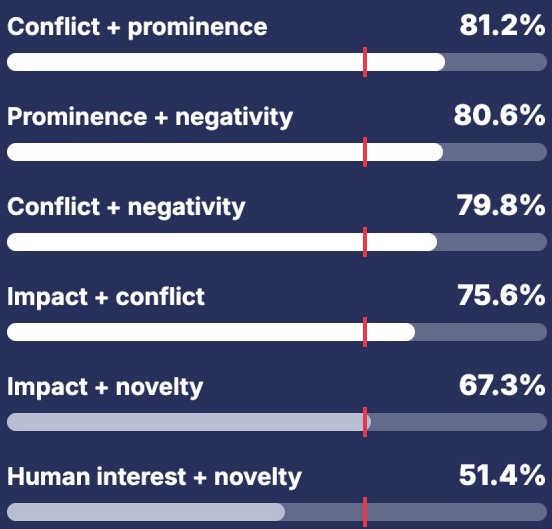
The pattern: timeliness did best of all. The tension values (negativity, prominence and conflict) came next. Impact works best paired with one of them.

News values: the secret sauce.

Impact was the most common news value, in 63% of releases. When paired with conflict and prominence, it increases the chances of being picked up.

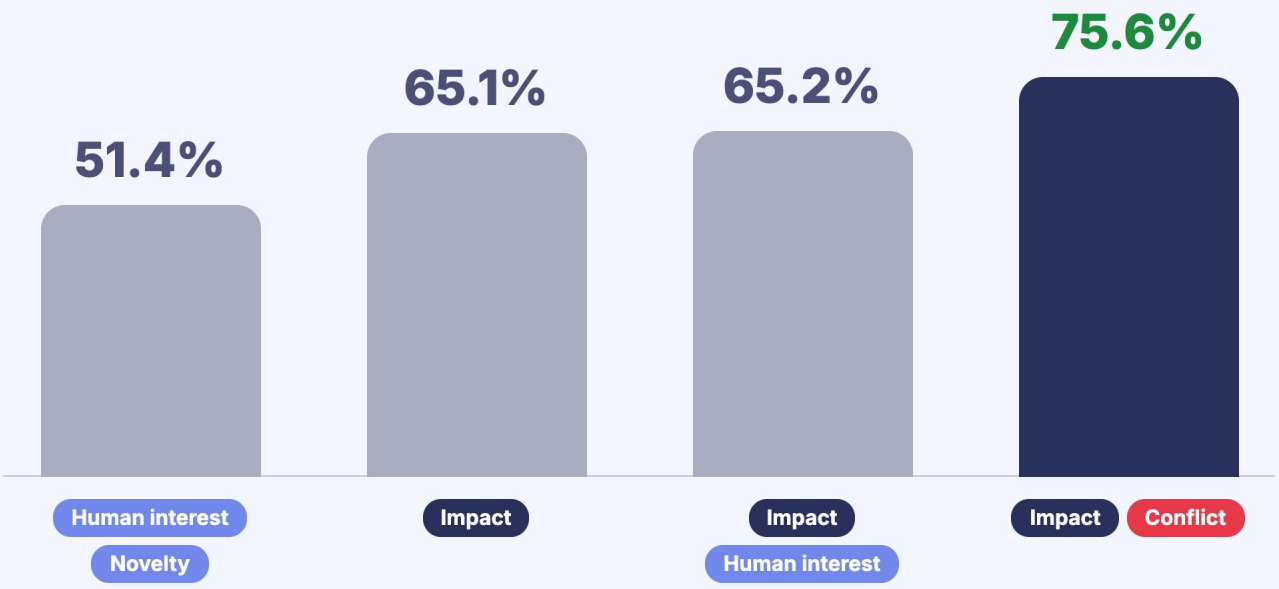
Pickup by pair of news values

65.9% average



Pairs overlap: a release can carry more than two news values.

Four ways to combine news values



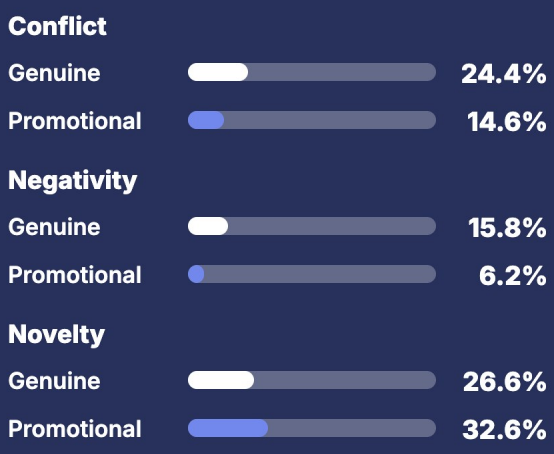
Based on a sample of 862 press releases.

Promotional releases

1 in 5 releases was written mainly to promote a product or company. How can we make those releases more interesting to the media?

Where they differ most

Promotional releases had less conflict and negativity, and leaned on novelty.



Opened, not run

34.0%

median open rate for promotional releases

Journalists open them just as often but an open does not always translate to a pickup.

What helps

+13 pts

the pickup increased when a promotional release contained tension or a prominent name

63.6% were picked up, against 50.6% for promotional releases overall.

Where they come from

49%

of finance and business releases were promotional

Against 6% in health and 4% in politics. Industry and resources was next highest, at 37%.

Promotional releases that were still picked up

> *"HOYTS unveils world-leading LED movie experience at Melbourne Central flagship cinema"*

> *"Sydney's Biggest Easter Egg Hunt Hops into Moore Park for 2026"*

What to do

- **Find the news before you write**
- **Tie a product story to something bigger: a trend, data or a cost to people**
- **Add tension or a known name where it's genuine**
- **Don't rely on novelty alone**

Reactions and commentary

Press releases off the back of a news story make the most significant impact to pickup.

Only a few releases reacted to the news. Those that did were picked up nearly nine times in ten. Plan for scheduled moments and move fast on breaking ones.

Pickup rate



Scheduled news

92.0%

of releases were picked up when reacting to scheduled news

Budgets, RBA decisions, elections, court rulings and data releases. You can prepare for these in advance.

Breaking news

86.7%

of releases were picked up when reacting to unplanned events

Outages, the fuel crisis, floods, heatwaves and airspace closures.

A real lift

75%

of organisations got more pickup when they reacted to the news

Compared with their own releases that didn't react to news.

Scheduled news

> *"Monash experts: Federal Government budget"*

> *"EXPERT ALERT - 2026 NAPLAN RESULTS"*

Breaking news

> *"Expert available to comment on Telstra outage"*

> *"UNSW experts available on the Nepal-Tibet flood crisis"*

What to do

- **Keep a calendar of scheduled news, with an expert ready for each**
- **Name the moment in the headline**
- **Keep it short: about 350 words**
- **Send early, while the story is live**

SECTION 2

Writing and sending

How the way a release is written and sent shapes its chances. Small choices, big differences.

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Taking advantage of the quiet hours

Most releases land between 9am and noon. The quiet hours have far less competition.

When releases are sent

Share of all releases, by send time



Fewer releases, more pickup

	Share of sends	Picked up
Before 6am, after 6pm	6.9%	76.5%
9am to noon	35.8%	63.3%

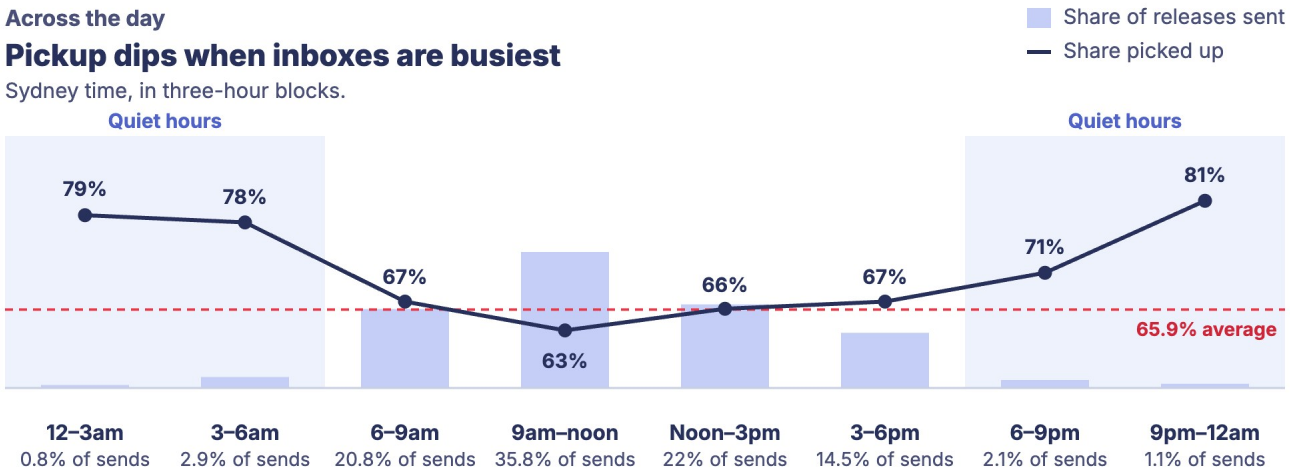
What to do

- **Consider sending before 6am or after 6pm**
- **Avoid the 9am to noon rush**

Across the day

Pickup dips when inboxes are busiest

Sydney time, in three-hour blocks.



The send

Afternoon sends

Tuesday to Thursday, 12pm to 6pm

66.1%

Monday to Thursday, 9am to noon

61.7%

The send

Fridays did best

Best weekday: Friday

69.0%

Weakest weekday: Monday

61.8%

The send

Plan ahead

Planned news gives you the most control over timing. A one- to two-day embargo can also help journalists plan. See the Embargoes deep dive on page 17.

These are patterns in the data, not proof of cause. Timing is linked to pickup, but it isn't the only factor. More statements and reactions to breaking news go out after hours which could influence the results.

Write the news, not the announcement

Headlines that announced, launched or unveiled something were picked up 50% of the time. Headlines that warned, urged or flagged a risk reached 77%.



Length

No rule

short and long headlines both did well

Very short and very long headlines were both picked up more often than average. What the headline says matters more than how many words it takes.

Numbers

Dollars

beat other numbers

When money is at stake, put the amount in the headline.

The announcement trap

Half

of launch headlines were picked up

Headlines that announced, launched or unveiled something did worst of any type we tested. Journalists want the news, not the news that something exists.

For example

Instead of **"Organisation X launches new report on housing"**, lead with what the report found and who it affects: **"One in three renters is skipping meals to pay rent"**.

Illustrative example.

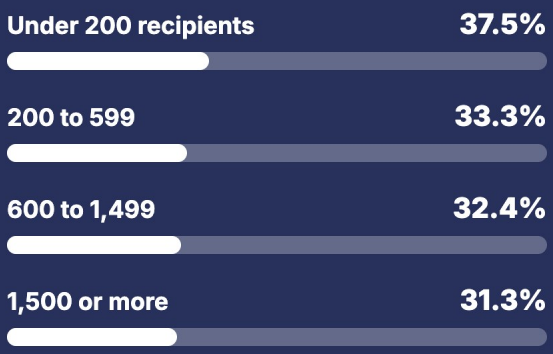
What to do

- **Lead with what changes, not what you're launching**
- **Use a dollar figure when money is at stake**
- **Make every word carry news, however many**

Bigger lists win on reach. Smaller lists win on attention.

Go broad when you need reach. Go small when the story is niche and relevance matters.

Median open rate, by list size



Attention

37.5%

median open rate for lists under 200

Against 31.3% for lists of 1,500 or more. A small, targeted list is read by more of the people on it.

Reach

17 vs 8

median pickups per release

Lists of 1,500 or more against lists under 200. Bigger lists are picked up more often, and more widely when they are.

Efficiency

17 vs 0.7

pickups per 100 recipients

Each recipient on a small list is worth far more.

Choosing your list

Want reach? Go broad. Bigger lists are picked up more often and more widely. **Got a niche story? Go small.** When relevance or targeted coverage matters more than volume, a smaller list is opened more and earns more pickups for each recipient.

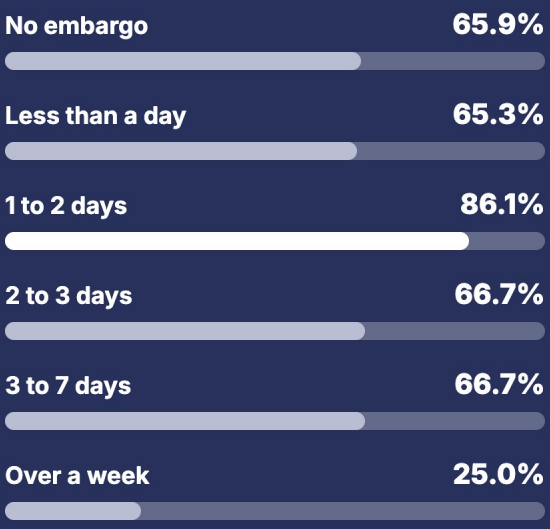
What to do

- **Decide the goal before you build the list**
- **Go small for a niche story that needs targeted coverage**
- **Go broad when you want it republished widely**

Embargoes, underrated?

Few releases used an embargo, and fewer still gave journalists one to two days. But those that did were picked up far more often.

Pickup by embargo lead time



Lead time is from when a release was submitted to when its embargo lifted.

Who uses them

3.3%

of releases had an embargo

Mostly health, environment and education news.

Same-day embargoes

65.3%

picked up with an embargo of under a day

Barely different from no embargo at all (65.9%). The lift only shows up when journalists get a day or two to prepare.

When they lift

Midnight

is the most common lift time

Most embargoes lifted at midnight or early in the morning, ready for the day's news. Monday was the most common day.

What gets embargoed

Mostly planned research and report launches with a set release date, which helps journalists get more time to go through large amounts of data.

What to do

- **Embargo planned news, like a report or research finding**
- **Give journalists one to two days' notice**
- **Same-day embargoes made little difference**

Put a voice up front

Releases that quoted someone in the first 75 words were picked up 72.4% of the time, against 64.2% when the first quote came later.



Quote early

16%

of releases with quotes put one up front

Most waited until after the first 75 words.

More than one quote

No lift

from adding more quotes

Releases with no quotes did as well as those with three or more. Where the first quote sits mattered, not how many there were.

Who's speaking

Politicians

did slightly better when quoted first

Academics and researchers followed.

What the quote says matters too

Quotes that named a concern or a next step beat the average. Overused wording such as 'delighted to announce' fell below it.

What to do

- **Get a quote into the first or second paragraph**
- **Cut 'delighted to announce'**
- **Name the stakes and what happens next**
- **Focus on placement, not the number of quotes**

What this means for PR and comms teams

1 Start with a genuine story.

Real news was picked up 22 points more often than promotional releases.

2 State why it matters.

Lead with the impact, and add tension or a well-known name where the story genuinely has one.

3 Match the list to the goal.

Targeted lists for specific outlets, broad lists for reach.

4 Lead with the news.

Say what changes, not what you're launching, and quote your spokesperson early on.

5 React to the news.

Releases tied to a news moment were picked up 89% of the time.

6 Send in the quiet hours.

Before 6am or after 6pm did best. Give journalists time to prepare.

About this report

The analysis covers 7,850 press releases from 553 organisations distributed through Medianet between January and August 2026. It excludes 646 media alerts and invitations, which are notices to journalists rather than stories to publish.

Pickup means a news outlet published the release itself, using close to the same wording, as identified by Medianet's Pickup Tracker across around 2,000 Australian media websites.

News values and the genuine-or-promotional classification were assessed from a sample of 862 press releases.

Pickup rates show the share of press releases picked up by the media, with each release counted once. Across 7,850 releases, clear patterns emerge in what successful releases have in common. They're not a formula that guarantees coverage, but they're a strong, evidence-based guide to what works.

Media enquiries

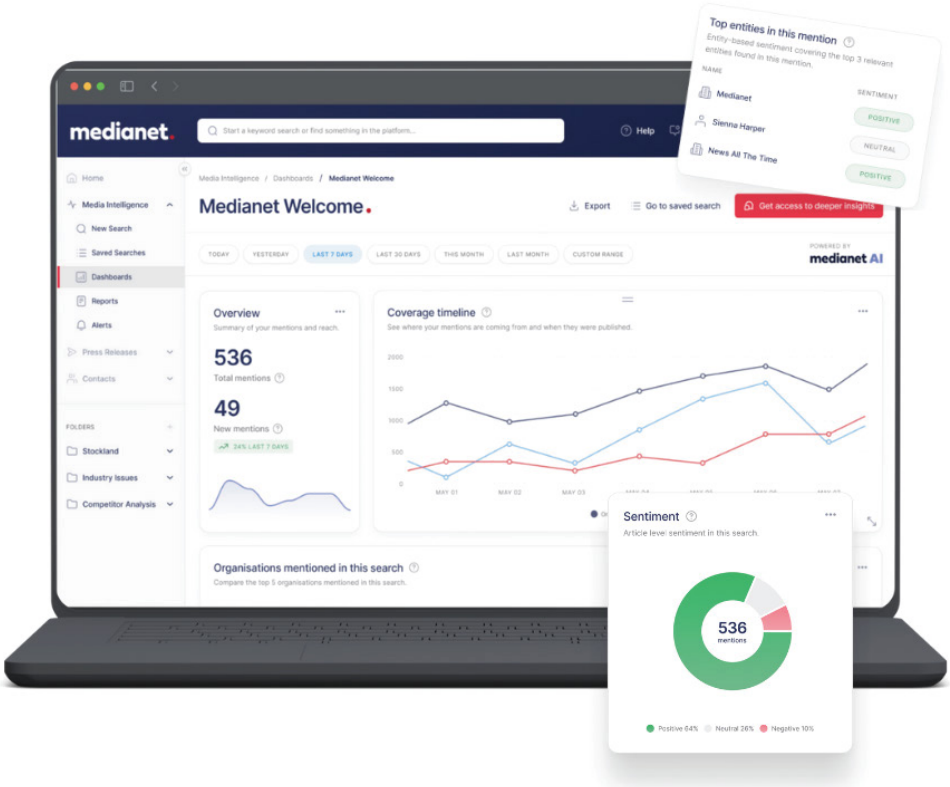
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About Medianet.

Medianet is Australia's most trusted media intelligence and communications platform, backed by over 40 years of expertise. Owned by Australia's largest media houses, Medianet offers integrated PR solutions, including press release distribution, a comprehensive journalist database, intuitive media monitoring, and expert analysis. Medianet empowers organisations to connect with target audiences, achieve earned media and measure the success of their communication strategies.



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