

Suggested Guidelines for Working with International Media

As you all know, Kangaroo Island has featured heavily in the media around the globe since the start of the devastating fires.

As per the nature of media and news outlets, the most ‘damaging’ and ‘sensationalist’ images and quotes sell the most papers. While this is great for their sales, it causes concern and fear amongst their readers, meaning they are less likely to book a holiday, and more likely to cancel one if it has already been booked.

To try to mitigate these issues, here are some general tips when dealing with international media in particular.

- **DO be yourself.** They are looking for authenticity in their stories; the people factor is what brings that to life.
- **DO rely on facts,** not hearsay and rumour, or even unsubstantiated reports if you don’t know its origins. You can always refer the media to someone else if you don’t know a specific answer to their question. It is a fact that the whole of Australia is *not* on fire. In fact, only 3% of the country has been impacted by bushfire directly.
- **DO decline interview opportunities if you are not comfortable.** None of this is mandatory, and you all have other things to concern yourself with at this time.
- **DO change the narrative** to a ‘good news’ story. Talk about the support you’ve received from friends, family, neighbours, community, government, charities, etc.
- **DO highlight how people can help.** Buy Kangaroo Island products, visit the island, donate to charities and communities.
- **DO be positive.** Share the good news stories, share the wildlife recovery stories, the mateship stories. We need to counteract the doom and gloom that is the current narrative.
- **DON’T use colloquialisms (slang), ‘Australianisms’ or ‘alarmist’ language.** Often this gets lost in translation and individual words can often get picked up as the lead angle. Terms such as ‘apocalypse’, ‘Armageddon’, and ‘bloody’ can be used easily for sensationalist headlines. For example, the Los Angeles Times ran on its front page on 16 January ‘Animal Apocalypse’ alongside distressing images of dead kangaroos and koalas. Note that ‘bloody’ is also considered a swear word in many countries, despite being very commonplace here.
- **DON’T draw attention to the number of dead animals** and devastation. While it is absolutely a reality of the situation, the media don’t need to know/see koalas and kangaroos being thrown into a mass pit grave. This is the sort of imagery that makes visitors think there are no animals left alive on the island.

- **DON'T allow media to lead you into saying anything you're not ok with.** Media are trained to ask purposely leading questions to elicit the sorts of answers that create headlines. Take your time when answering – their deadline is not your problem.
- **DON'T share with media distressing or negative images.** They will likely find this anyway – let's not make it easy for them.

If you have any questions, would like clarification or further information, please contact the South Australian Tourism Commission on the details below.

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