

100% Independent

# Andrew Wilkie

## Independent Member for Clark



How to make yourself heard and get results from government

## RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL EVENT

This information sheet has been compiled based on the experiences of the office of Andrew Wilkie MP and is not exhaustive.

Organising events are a lot of work but can be really great if done properly. Here are some key things that in our experience make an event a success:

- Give yourself plenty of time to plan and organise the event;
- check your dates – make sure it does not clash with other events or work commitments. If you want MPs to attend make sure Parliament is not sitting;
- pick a good venue – think about the atmosphere, space and whether you need catering/audio visual equipment etc;
- get good speakers – strong public speakers who really know their stuff and have an interesting and engaging way of conveying information;
- organise a working microphone or PA – make sure you have good equipment and have practised how to use it;
- draw a good crowd – depending on the event (eg whether it is a rally or forum) this may mean a large crowd of passionate people or a carefully targeted audience with an interest and expertise in the topic;
- advertise your event well – send personalised invitations to VIPs, and use social media and email. For public events such as rallies, consider print ads, radio, posters and flyers. Send out a reminder just prior to your event;
- ensure you have a good running sheet and strong facilitator – keep control of your event, allocate short time slots to speakers and stick to it. Control the length of questions from the audience! Most events should go for no more than an hour;
- contact media - for most events getting the media along is important. See our 'Getting the Right Kind of Media Attention' media guide; and
- consider entertainment or music – often this will brighten an event and allow people to relax.

### Types of events

#### Rallies

Rallies are a great way to respond to a hot issue as media attention and a good crowd are more likely. Some key things to remember when organising a rally are:

- Get permission – book the space, eg Parliament Lawns and talk to the police, council and other relevant stakeholders;
- promote – the key to a good rally is lots of people so promote it through social media, press ads, radio, flyers and posters. Rallies often have to be organised very quickly so keep your networks up to date;
- connect with like-minded organisations – tap into their networks and get their support. A rally with broad/varied support will have a bigger impact and likely gain more attention from media and parliamentarians; and
- make some good placards and banners and hand them out – props help generate a good atmosphere and can result in some good photo opportunities for the media.

#### Forums

Forums can be a good way to present information, consult and network. However they can also be a waste of time if not done properly. Always clearly identify the purpose and desired outcome of your forum before organising anything else. If you struggle to do this, then perhaps a forum is not the appropriate event for you. A few other key things to remember are:

- Choose a good facilitator – someone that can keep debate moving and the event running on time;
- present information in a creative and interesting way – again stick to the topic and always keep in mind what it is you want to achieve;
- provide good networking opportunities – many people attend these events to meet others; and
- catering – think about offering some food or hot drinks at least.

## Fundraisers

The most important and challenging part of organising a fundraiser is getting enough people to attend. Some tips that may help with this are:

- Give yourself a good amount of time to organise the event;
- pick an appropriate type of event (eg dinner, quiz night) for your cause, target audience, budget and resources;
- offer a drawcard – a good speaker, live band, fun or unusual experience;
- have additional fundraisers during the event eg auction or a raffle;
- be aware of the rules – are donations/purchases tax deductible? Do you need a license for the auction or raffle? Can you sell or serve alcohol at the event? Do you need to issue receipts?
- follow up on invitations and be sure to get RSVPs; and
- treat your donors well – quickly follow up with receipts, thank you notes and post out any prizes etc.

## Parliamentary events

Events are often held at Australian Parliament House by organisations and lobby groups. It is necessary to ask a current MP to book the space and organise people's entry through security if they do not have parliamentary passes. Important things to remember are:

- Make sure the scheduled date is when both the House of Representatives and the Senate are sitting as more people will attend;
- carefully target the MPs you invite – don't just send out a blanket invitation by email and hope for the best. Invite political staffers as well, and always follow up invitations with a phone call; and
- make sure the event is worth it – it can be costly, especially for organisations not based in Canberra. Numerous events are held each day in Parliament so yours must be relevant or stand out in some way so that people will attend.

**ANDREW WILKIE MP  
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Visit [www.andrewwilkie.org](http://www.andrewwilkie.org) where you'll find media releases, speeches, newsletters and videos.

Or feel free to drop by the office at 188 Collins Street Hobart  
or call 6234 5255 or email [andrew.wilkie.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:andrew.wilkie.mp@aph.gov.au)

Authorised by Andrew Wilkie 188 Collins Street Hobart 7000