Media Engagement 101: An introduction for researchers

In this online session, our panellist members and moderator shared their experience with engaging with the media and provided these take-away tips.

How to get started
- Work with MQ’s media team’s freelance writer and have an article ghost-written
- Write a topical article for The Conversation
- Consider writing for trade press (media outlets that are written and published for a particular industry) – these can be easier to get published in but increase the chance your research may be picked up by mainstream media
- Start with print media – often regarded as the “friendlier” medium as usually there is capacity to review your quotes and ensure they are accurate. (You can also tidy up the wording of your quotes so they are more appropriate for the written rather than spoken text)

How to be found by the media
- Maintain your research output – the journalists are looking for “experts” with track records
- Keep your PURE profile up-to-date

When preparing for an upcoming media engagement
- Ask for the questions or agenda in advance
- Identify and focus on your “so what” factor
- Don’t have/give too many key points – minimise options to increase the likelihood the journalist will focus on what you want them to focus on
- Prepare specific examples that are short and easy to capture
- Practice catchy “soundbites” to use as responses
- Memorise and quote a few numbers or facts
- Practice answering questions with the media team including things to say if you don’t want to answer a question – divert question back to what you want to talk about

How to deal with difficult questions
- Remember you are allowed to say “no” to an interview and/or request that you do not answer particular questions (getting the questions ahead of time can help)
- For live interviews, practice strategies to divert the question back to what you want to talk about

Who to ask for help?
- Work with your more experienced colleagues such as senior co-authors an academic paper or an article for media outlet like The Lighthouse and The Conversation
- Work with your faculty media advisor – they can help you prepare for an interview, practice tricky questions, find your news-worthy hook, determine if the media engagement is worth undertaking