

# Power of the Pen!

by Tony Orman

William Shakespeare once wrote, "The power of the pen is mightier than the sword."

It is true. Let me explain. Letters to the editor column is powerful. Thousands read the letter. Politicians and departmental bureaucrats get a "clipping" service to send them news items and letters from newspapers.

In short, writing a letter to an editor is relatively easy and a very effective way in getting a viewpoint to either the decision-makers and/or the many thousands of readers of a daily newspaper.

Letters to the editor are a very effective way to communicate your concern to a large number of people. Importantly putting the issue out into the arena of public debate focuses the attention of readers to the matter.

The audience may be large. In the case of a metropolitan paper of 150,000 copies printed, the number of readers may be three per individual newspaper. Newspapers go into a home where two, three, four or more people may read it. In a workplace in the canteen, a dozen or more people may read it.

Assume a factor of three people read each paper on average. That means 150,000 copies have a potential readership of 450,000!!

The letters to the editor section is widely read, probably far more than any other section.

Government departments, politicians and agencies, regularly peruse the letters to the editor columns to gauge public thinking. In fact, press clipping services are frequently employed to note relevant subject areas for clients. Your letter to the editor will sooner or later end up on the desk of a cabinet minister or department.

There is no doubt, the written word in a newspaper or magazine carries a fair impact.

Not all letters get published. An editor usually has the right without reservation to publish or not publish a letter.

Nevertheless a letter to the editor has a better chance if it is succinct and lucid. Metropolitan papers (eg Dominion/Post, Press, [NZ Herald](#)) are difficult to get into particularly now with most in the the monopoly of Fairfax control.

But two independent of Fairfax papers are the Otago Daily Times and NZ Herald. And provincial papers (eg Waikato Times, Marlborough Express, Nelson Mail, Hawke Bay Today) often publish letters from outside their individual region and more so than big city papers. They are worth a try.

Even local community papers are very worthwhile. Not everyone subscribes or gets daily papers but community papers usually go into every household.

A few tips:-



- Keep your letter brief. A six line letter may pack more impact than two dozen lines. Certainly short letters are read by readers more than long letters. Most papers/magazines have a word limit of perhaps 200 - sometimes 250 - words.
- Try to get the main thrust of your letter summarised in the first sentence.
- Use your name for publishing. Most newspapers will not accept non-de-plumes (e.g. "Angry Tax-payer", "Mother of Four").
- Preferably type in double space or print your letter.
- Print on the top "Letter to Editor For Publication."
- Sign the letter with your signature plus name and address and phone number. Or just e mail the letter in - no signature ut address and phone number.
- Post or fax the letter or best of all, e-mail it.

It takes ten minutes, perhaps 15 minutes to write a letter. Surely, that's not too much to ask of you to stand up for your principles!

### **Footnote:-**

Check the guidelines for contributions with the paper directly - in general though, letters need to be no more than 200 words and you need to supply your name and address and phone number.

### **Upper North Island**

Whangarei - Northern Advocate.

Email: [editor@northernadvocate.co.nz](mailto:editor@northernadvocate.co.nz)

Auckland - New Zealand Herald.

Email: [letters@nzherald.co.nz](mailto:letters@nzherald.co.nz)

Hamilton - Waikato Times.

Email: [editor@waikatotimes.co.nz](mailto:editor@waikatotimes.co.nz)

### **Central North Island**

Tauranga - Bay of Plenty Times

Email: [editor@bopp.co.nz](mailto:editor@bopp.co.nz)

Rotorua - Rotorua Daily Post

Email: [editor@dailypost.co.nz](mailto:editor@dailypost.co.nz)

Gisborne - Gisborne Herald

Email: [editorial@gisborneherald.co.nz](mailto:editorial@gisborneherald.co.nz)

Hawkes Bay - Hawkes Bay Today

Email: [editor@hbtoday.co.nz](mailto:editor@hbtoday.co.nz)

Wanganui - Wanganui Chronicle

Email: [letters@wanganuichronicle.co.nz](mailto:letters@wanganuichronicle.co.nz)

New Plymouth - Taranaki Daily News  
Email: [editor@tnl.co.nz](mailto:editor@tnl.co.nz)

### **Lower North Island**

Palmerston North - Manawatu Standard  
Email: [editor@mnl.co.nz](mailto:editor@mnl.co.nz)

Wairarapa - Wairarapa Times Age  
Email: [editorial@times-age.co.nz](mailto:editorial@times-age.co.nz)

Wellington - Dominion Post  
Email: [letters@dompost.co.nz](mailto:letters@dompost.co.nz)

### **Upper South Island**

Marlborough - Marlborough Express  
Email: [mailbox@marlexpress.co.nz](mailto:mailbox@marlexpress.co.nz)

Nelson - Nelson Mail  
Email: [editor@nelsonmail.co.nz](mailto:editor@nelsonmail.co.nz)

Westport - Westport News  
Email: [editorial@westportnews.co.nz](mailto:editorial@westportnews.co.nz)

Greymouth - Greymouth Evening Star  
Email: [editor@greystar.co.nz](mailto:editor@greystar.co.nz)

### **Central and Lower South Island**

Christchurch - The Press  
Email: [letters@press.co.nz](mailto:letters@press.co.nz)

Ashburton - The Ashburton Guardian  
Email: [enquiries@theguardian.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@theguardian.co.nz)

Timaru - Timaru Herald  
Email: [editor@timaruherald.co.nz](mailto:editor@timaruherald.co.nz)

Oamaru - Oamaru Mail  
Email: [news@oamarumail.co.nz](mailto:news@oamarumail.co.nz)

Dunedin - Otago Daily Times  
Email: [odt.editorial@alliedpress.co.nz](mailto:odt.editorial@alliedpress.co.nz)

Invercargill - Southland Times  
Email: [letters@stl.co.nz](mailto:letters@stl.co.nz)