

Writing for the Weekly

The following guidelines are for contributors to *The Cobar Weekly*. Writing for the general public can be a daunting task, but if basic rules are followed the task will be more enjoyable.

- ◆ We prefer to receive information by email (editor@cobarweekly.com.au or journo@cobarweekly.com.au). Please follow-up emails with a phone call as emails are sometimes unreliable.
- ◆ When writing an article always use the What, Why, Where, When, Who and How as the basis for your articles. These are the centre of every story, and should appear in the first two or three sentences. If the reader only has time to read the first paragraph all the important information should be there. Also, if the editor is short of space, only the 'lead' may be used.
- ◆ The first paragraph should also act as a 'hook' to create interest and make the reader go further into the story.
- ◆ Keep reports simple and paragraphs short. Write in short, concise sentences. A guideline is to have only one thought or piece of information per sentence.
- ◆ Be aware that advertising is advertising and a paid advertisement is sometimes the only way to promote events or businesses. An article should not include any times or dates unless they have been advertised. If you are unsure about this, please contact us.
- ◆ *The Cobar Weekly* has very strict deadlines which must be abided by. Newspapers must meet printing deadlines and any stories which fail to come in on time generally cannot make the paper. Early articles help as they allow a steady flow of preparation for publication rather than a last minute rush.
- ◆ Often space restricts the amount of stories which can be printed. Newspapers place advertisements on the page first and then place the stories around them. If we run out of space we can't always add pages. Stories can sometimes be left out because they are not suitable.
- ◆ Don't be disheartened if your report is shortened or changed. This could be for space, clarity or legal reasons. Important details should be mentioned first, because when space is short, the article will be cropped from the bottom.
- ◆ What goes in the paper is ultimately the responsibility of the newspaper staff—the staff have knowledge of defamation and copyright laws and will always err on the side of caution.
- ◆ Check accuracy and make sure names, etc, are correct and check for grammatical errors as well. Always check any names you are not sure of – first and last. Avoid nicknames and initials. When using abbreviations, eg RFS, always spell out the full name in the first instance (ie Rural Fire Service).
- ◆ Write as if your audience has no prior knowledge of the topic—explain it fully, but concisely. Write for the wider community—remember *The Cobar Weekly* is a newspaper not a club newsletter.
- ◆ Put your name and phone number on the bottom of the page. This is used if something needs to be checked.
- ◆ Be wary of joking in your reports or poking fun at people. What's funny at the time can turn sour in print.
- ◆ Remember, use the three Cs: Colourful – make your information interesting; Correct – check sports scores and spelling; Concise – don't leave out important information, don't include trivia.