

Advocacy: Go on, write that letter!

Gus Plater

There is no doubt that a letter published in the newspaper, especially 'our Herald' is a rewarding and surprisingly useful exercise. As well as contributing an experienced point of view to a debate, there is the personal satisfaction of having your opinion acknowledged. So do it, have a go.

It is obvious that the guidelines on length and provision of personal detail need to be followed, however the Herald editors demonstrate some discretion and a little extra wordage to make a significant point is, at times, worth it.

There are those who dash off a letter almost as part of their daily routine. I would urge some restraint. Concentrate your energies on matters about which you are well versed and even passionate. This will come through in your correspondence and again, Herald editors are very good at winnowing the chaff from the grain. If you are able get someone to proof your letter, partners are sometimes the best first draft editors. Also avoid inflammatory language, common sense will tell you what is appropriate, or not.

Get your letters in by noon, occasionally later contributions make it through but not often. I have no evidence to back this assertion however I think that weekend letters follow a different path to those through the week. Possibly this is because of staffing arrangements. However, don't neglect the weekend.

I regard pithy, possibly funny one-liners differently to letters of substance. However they are not to be eschewed, if you have a point to make, a quote to offer, or an original line, send it.

While the publication of your letter is important it is not the only criteria of satisfaction. The mere getting your thoughts organised on paper can provide a return. Your effort is also aggregated and added to indicators of opinion on that day and at the end of the week so all is not lost.

Don't ignore the impact your opinion can have through a letter to your local paper either. Whether 'free' or an old established title, your input will be valued.

Contributor details

Gus Plater (gusandmarg@exemail.com.au) February 2017



Gus had the privilege of opening Kincumber High School as its first principal in 1990, where he remained almost until the turn of the century. During that time he served on the Federal Government's Schools Commission as a NSWTF representative. During his service in the Armidale district he participated in the governance of both Armidale CAE and the University of New England, contacts which he has maintained. He is a Life Member of the NSW Teachers Federation.