



THE MEDIA ANGLE

There's nothing like a good old fashioned street rally to garner support in the community for your particular cause. If the protest gets media coverage it's a great opportunity for your group to tell the world what it wants. But it can be a double-edged sword if the rally gets out of hand or too many messages are being sold.

The recent student protest in Melbourne is a good example of this.

[Watch Channel Nine story here](#)

It was meant to be a peaceful protest with a strong "affordable education" message and it seems for a while at least this very worthwhile message came through loud and clear. But as Channel Nine's Andrew Lund stated "the message they hoped to convey missed its mark". I think he has a point.

Firstly, the 100 or so strong peaceful rally escalated into a confrontation with the police. Scuffles began between protestors and police, shoes were hurled towards a police line and card-board effigies were burnt in the centre of the city. The Federal Treasurer, Joe Hockey, got caught in the action and was guided away surrounded by police and security guards. There have been allegations of assault from both the protest group and the police.

Secondly the chanting began with focussed slogans like "our education is not-for-profit" and once the "trouble" began they (perhaps understandably) changed to "let them go, let them go". According to the Channel nine story, later on the chants were about land rights.

I believe the result was a watered-down message. The stories across the mainstream media were mainly about the violence, arrests and the Federal Treasurer being caught up in it all. The affordable education message was not the focus at all.

I have two simple pieces of advice about protest rallies.

1. Have a strong but simple message and keep to it.
2. If you can avoid scuffles with police, do!

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