



## **Mindframe support for media reporting on the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse**

The Mindframe National Media Initiative (Mindframe) and the Dart Centre Asia Pacific (Dart) recognises that the proceedings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) will be of ongoing interest to the Australian media. The reporting of the Royal Commission may impact on interviewees, the wider community and media professionals themselves, due to the distressing nature of the topic of child sexual abuse and the potential for stories to include issues regarding suicide, self-harm and mental illness.

In August 2013, *Mindframe* partnered with the Dart Centre Asia Pacific to provide a forum for journalists about reporting on the Royal Commission to promote informed, accurate and ethical reporting. As part of ongoing support for the media when reporting on suicide and mental illness, *Mindframe* has compiled the following information to provide further assistance when covering the Royal Commission.



Justice Peter McClellan addressing journalists at the Dart forum

### **Tips for safe reporting**

The Royal Commission has asked journalists to be aware that survivors of child sexual abuse are often traumatised by this experience and the impact of this trauma can be life-long. For some survivors, telling their stories can be re-traumatising. For this reason, the Royal Commission encourages sensitive, ethical reporting of the issues and requests that, wherever possible, the contact details of support services are included in media reports. A list of relevant services can be found on the Royal Commission website [here](#).

It is also important to remember that suicide, self-harm and mental illness are complex issues and certain ways of reporting these issues can adversely impact on vulnerable members of the community. Quick tips on safely reporting suicide, self-harm and mental illness are available at the following links:

- [Suicide](#)
- [Mental Illness](#)
- [Self-harm](#)

Adding help-seeking information to stories about suicide, self-harm and mental illness provides options for immediate crisis support for people who may be negatively affected by a story. A list of 24-hour crisis lines (pictured right) and other support services can be found on the *Mindframe* website [here](#).

#### **National 24/7 Crisis Services**

- Lifeline 13 11 14
  - Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467
  - Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800
  - MensLine Australia 1300 78 99 78
- ✓ Add two crisis services to any story about suicide.
  - ✓ Match service information to the story (e.g. age, gender, background).
  - ✓ Provide direct links to services in online content.



### Resources for interviewees

To help consumers and carers prepare for sharing their story publicly, *Mindframe* has developed a resource on working with the media and speaking publicly about suicide and mental illness, available from the *Mindframe* website [here](#).

To support people who have been impacted by child sexual abuse to speak with the Royal Commission about their experiences the Royal Commission has developed a '[how to tell your story](#)' fact sheet, [practice guidelines](#) about 'telling your story', and guiding questions to inform statements for the Royal Commission, which are available from the [Royal Commission website](#).

### Self-care for media professionals

Reporting trauma such as suicide and sexual abuse can be distressing, especially if they have been affected by trauma in the past. Journalists may report on stories where there is graphic evidence of death or harm, they may be affected by other people's distress, or may be required to interview people who have been bereaved or are in shock.

It is important for journalists and the news room staff to safeguard their own wellbeing in these situations and for news organisations to extend care. Journalist should consider alerting a manager if they believe they will be adversely affected by covering a story. During or following a story, they should ensure they are aware of their emotional reactions and consider talking it over with someone they trust, or contacting one of the support services listed in the *Mindframe* resources [here](#).

Further tips for managers and editors about staff welfare are available from the Dart website [here](#) and tips for self-care for news professionals can be accessed [here](#).

### Story sources and support

Story sources and contacts for mental health and suicide prevention organisations, which can provide comment or further information for stories about suicide and mental illness, are available from the *Mindframe* website [here](#).

Further information for the media is available from the Royal Commission website [here](#).

The Royal Commission media officer can be contacted via email [media@childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au](mailto:media@childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au) or by phoning 02 8282 3966 or 0477 392 754.

#### Expert advice on media reporting of suicide and mental illness is available via

##### The *Mindframe* program team

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#### Expert advice on the ethics and practice of trauma journalism is available via

##### Dart Centre Asia Pacific

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