

Mindframe media alert

Mindframe advice for reporting on the death of Mark Salling

31 January 2018

Please cascade to all media staff

Mindframe would like to thank the Australian media for their responsible coverage of the death of *Glee* star Mark Salling overnight.

With the story obviously in the public interest and receiving ongoing coverage, it is important that media continue to report responsibly. Repeated and sustained coverage can increase the risk to those who are vulnerable or distressed.

We urge media to refrain from reporting the death as suicide until confirmed by official sources. This may help reduce speculation, which can be harmful and hard to manage. If the cause of death is confirmed as suicide, it is important not to speculate on deceased's motivations. Suicide is complex and rarely attributed to a single event.

We also urge media to avoid providing specific details about the method or location of death. Coverage of suicide by a celebrity can glamourise and normalise suicide, with research showing it can prompt imitation by vulnerable people.

Mindframe would like to remind media professionals to review content of overseas articles dealing with issues related to suicide and to ensure that they are in line with Australian [reporting standards](#) and editorial codes before posting online.

Any reports discussing suicide or mental illness should also include relevant [help-seeking](#) information.

Reporting celebrity suicide ?

- Celebrity suicides are newsworthy and will almost always be reported. Coverage of suicide by a celebrity can glamourise and normalise suicide, with research showing it can prompt imitation by vulnerable people.
- Given the potential impact of the story, ensure the death is not reported as a suicide until confirmed by official sources. This may help reduce speculation, which can be harmful and hard to manage.
- To minimise risk, ensure the story does not glamourise suicide or provide specific details about the method or location of death. Instead consider focusing on the wastefulness of the death, its impact on family and friends, general risk factors for suicide and help-seeking options for people who may be vulnerable.
- Be mindful that reports about the death may come up in other contexts (a second celebrity death) or around a significant date (movie release, anniversary etc.). Care should be taken each time the death is reported or referred to.

HELPFUL WAYS TO PRESENT INFORMATION

Suicide is an important issue of community concern. While there is limited research evidence to support positive outcomes related to media reporting of suicide, it is generally agreed that:

- Media play an important role in reporting about the broader issue of suicide, which includes analysis of policy, practice, research, rates and trends, and other areas of public interest
- Covering suicide sensitively and accurately can challenge public misconceptions and myths, increase community awareness and encourage discussion and prevention activities
- It is helpful when the community is informed about the risk factors of suicide, including warning signs, the importance of taking suicidal thoughts seriously and providing information about where people can get support
- Coverage that focuses on personal stories about overcoming suicidal thinking can promote hope and may encourage others to seek help
- Reporting that focuses on suicide as a health and community issue helps to increase community awareness and decrease stigma
- Reports that show the impact that suicide has on individuals and communities can increase understanding about the experiences of those affected by suicide.

Consider the language you use

Certain ways of describing suicide can alienate members of the community or inadvertently contribute to suicide being presented as glamorous or an option for dealing with problems. Some suggestions are provided below.

Issue 	Problematic 	Preferred 
Language that presents suicide as a desired outcome	'successful suicide', 'unsuccessful suicide'	'took their own life', 'ended their own life', 'died by suicide'
Phrases that associate suicide with 'crime' or 'sin'	'committed suicide', 'commit suicide'	'died by suicide', 'took their own life'
Language that glamorises a suicide attempt	'failed suicide', 'suicide bid'	'made an attempt on his life', 'suicide attempt', 'non-fatal attempt'
Phrases that sensationalise suicide	'suicide epidemic'	'higher rates', 'increasing rates', 'concerning rates'
Gratuitous use of the term 'suicide' out of context	'suicide mission', 'political suicide', 'suicide pass' (in sport)	refrain from using the term suicide out of context

Help-seeking information

Adding help-seeking information to stories (online, print and broadcast) can provide somewhere for people who may be adversely impacted by the coverage to find professional support.

National 24/7 Crisis Services

- **Lifeline:** 13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au
- **Suicide Call Back Service:** 1300 659 467 www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au
- **MensLine Australia:** 1300 78 99 79 www.mensline.org.au
- **beyondblue:** 1300 22 4636 www.beyondblue.org.au

Youth Support Services

- **24/7 support**
- **Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800 www.kidshelpline.com.au
- **Direct clinical services**
- **headspace:** 1800 650 890 www.headspace.org.au

Self-care

Reporting suicide and mental illness can also impact to the welfare of journalists. To support media professionals *Mindframe*, in consultation with the [DART Centre Asia Pacific](#), has developed journalism self-care resources for media professionals reporting suicide and mental illness. These resources include self-care tips for journalists as well as and advice for editors and line managers, and can be found [here](#).

Contact information

The *Mindframe* National Media Initiative can provide media comment or expert advice on media reporting of suicide and/or mental illness. Our spokesperson is: Marc Bryant, Program Manager *Mindframe* National Media Initiative.

For further information or advice, please visit the [Mindframe website](#) or contact:

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