

Mindframe advice for media: national suicide prevention campaigns

MEDIA ALERT: Tuesday 6 September

This week, suicide prevention will be the focus of three major campaigns: *Men, let's talk when things get tough* by Movember (launched today); R U OK?Day (Thursday 8th September) and World Suicide Prevention Day (Saturday 10th September).

It is a timely reminder for media professionals covering these events of the resources available through the *Mindframe* National Media Initiative which provide evidenced-based support and practical advice for journalists reporting suicide and mental illness.

The media can play a powerful role in raising awareness of suicide and suicide prevention, but stories about suicide also have the potential to do harm. Media codes of practice reinforce the need to proceed with caution when considering reports about suicide attempts and deaths, but do not discourage stories that are legitimately in the public interest or explore the broader issue of suicide.

Research also shows that media reporting of suicide in Australia is extensive.

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 options 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 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

Further information and resources on reporting suicide can be found on the *Mindframe* website www.mindframe-media.info

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.

Key national 24/7 crisis support services include:

- **Lifeline** 13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au
- **Suicide Call Back Service** 1300 659 467 www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au
- **MensLine Australia** 1300 789 978 www.mensline.org.au
- **beyondblue** 1300 224 636 www.beyondblue.org.au

Key national youth support services include:

- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 www.kidshelp.com.au
- headspace 1800 650 890 www.headspace.org.au

Further information about promoting help-seeking information is available on the *Mindframe* website www.mindframe-media.info/for-media/promote-help-seeking-information

Self-care for journalists

Reporting suicide 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 managers.

For journalists: www.mindframe-media.info/self-care-for-journalists

For newsroom managers: www.mindframe-media.info/self-care-for-news-managers

Further information

The *Mindframe* National Media Initiative can provide media comment or expert advice on media reporting of suicide and/or mental illness. Our spokespeople include:

- Jaelea Skehan, Director Hunter Institute of Mental Health
- Marc Bryant, Program Manager *Mindframe* National Media Initiative

Expert advice on media reporting of suicide and mental illness is available from:

The *Mindframe* program team

The *Mindframe* team at the Hunter Institute of Mental Health provides advice, resources and training to the media, mental health and suicide prevention and education sectors nationally to support the reporting, portrayal and communication about suicide and mental illness.



Tel: 02 4924 6904
[@MindframeMedia](https://twitter.com/MindframeMedia)
www.mindframe-media.info

The SANE Media Centre

The SANE Media Centre provides the media and the mental health sector with day-to-day guidance about reporting and portrayal of mental illness and suicide-related issues. It provides a 'one-stop' service of information, expert comment, advice and referral.



Tel: 03 9682 5933
[@SANEAustralia](https://twitter.com/SANEAustralia)
www.sane.org

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