



Mindframe
National Media Initiative

**Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
media forum report**

Mindframe & Dart Centre Asia Pacific



Introduction

More than 40 senior journalists from both print and broadcast took part in the Dart Centre Asia Pacific's media forum with regards to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The event took place at the ABC Ultimo studios in Sydney on August 30th, 2013. The *Mindframe* National Media Initiative provided sponsorship and actively took part in the day, which included as a panellist, resource distribution and evaluation. This short report provides an overview of the day and outcomes.



Pictured above: Justice McClellan addressing the forum

Format

1. Expert panel (understanding the experience of those who have been abused –issues over a life span):
 - Peter Gogarty victim and survivor
 - Pat Feenan, parent of survivor
 - Leonie Sheedy, co-founder of CLAN – Care Leavers Australian Network
 - Dr. Cathy Kezelman, President of ASCA – Adults Surviving Child Abuse
 - Linda Mottram, ABC, moderator
2. Expert panel (investigation, policy and perpetrators focus on the law, reform efforts, and the mind of the perpetrator):
 - Frank McGuire MP, Victorian Inquiry Commissioner, former journalist and Walkley Award winner
 - John Ellis, lawyer
 - Gerard Webster, psychologist
 - Mark Colvin, ABC, moderator.
3. Journalists to Journalist workshops (narrative, craft, ethics and self-care):
 - Bruce Shapiro – Dart Centre USA
 - Suzanne Smith – ABC
 - Marc Bryant – *Mindframe* National Media Initiative
 - Joanne McCarthy – The Newcastle Herald.



Issues discussed:

- Format and scope of the Royal Commission
- Timeframes regarding key events and outcomes
- Issues to consider when interviewing survivors and their families
- The impact on families and carers when a survivor speaks to the media and the support required
- Issues to consider when reporting on/interviewing the perpetrators (human rights approach advocated by Gerard Webster)



Pictured above: Bruce Shapiro (Dart), Joanne McCarthy (Newcastle Herald), Suzanne Smith (ABC) and Marc Bryant (Mindframe, Hunter Institute of Mental Health)

Issues raised:

- How to ensure someone who is interviewed is supported and 'ready' to be interviewed-what is the role of journalists in determining this
- What role journalists have in supporting those who are interviewed
- What is the role of journalists in ensuring the Royal Commission fulfills its role to the community and survivors
- How can journalists ensure the community remain engaged with the issue over the several years the Royal Commission will be working
- Impact of compassion/reporting fatigue
- Vicarious trauma and impact on journalists reporting on these issues
- Self-care principles
- Setting professional boundaries with people who have been impacted-how to avoid becoming an accidental counselor.
- How to report issues of self harm, suicide and mental illness in relation to the Royal Commission



Pictured above: Joanne McCarthy, Marc Bryant, Suzanne Smith and Dart Asia Pacific Managing Director Cait McMahon

Follow-up:

- *Mindframe* and Dart provided as sources of information and support
- Evaluation of identified need for specific resources regarding reporting issues of self harm, suicide and mental illness in relation to the Royal Commission within *Mindframe*

Summary of feedback from evaluation sheet:

Demographics:

A total of 14 participants provided formal evaluation data. Of these nine identified as female, three male and two did not respond. Six of the respondents were aged 20-30 years of age, four aged 30-40 years, one aged 40-50 and the remaining three were 50 or over. No participants identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, twelve did not identify and two did not respond.

Relevance of forum:

Eighty five per cent of respondents stated that the information from the forum was very relevant to their work as a journalist.



Need for specific tips and resources regarding the reporting of suicide, self-harm and mental illness in relation to the Royal Commission:

Respondents were asked if they believed that specific tips regarding the reporting of suicide, self-harm and mental illness relating to the Royal Commission would assist their work as a journalist. Respondents were asked to indicate their response on a 10 point Likert scale ranging from 'not at all' (1) 'neutral' (5-6) and 'very much so' (10). A total of **79%** (11 out of 14) of respondents indicated that specific tips would be very useful (score of 8 or above).

Supporting those who may be interviewed in relation to the Royal Commission:

Respondents were also asked if they believed that it would be useful to have information for supporting those who may be interviewed in relation to the Royal Commission. A total of **93%** (13 out of 14) of respondents indicated that specific tips would be very useful (score of 8 or above).

Self-care for journalists

The final question within the survey related to the impact of covering traumatic events and issues on the well-being of journalists. Respondents were asked if they believed it is important for journalists to be supported and given specific guidance when covering issues relating to suicide, self-harm and mental illness. A total of **93%** (13 out of 14) of respondents indicated that support and guidance would be very useful (score of 9 or above).



**Pictured above: Bruce Shapiro,
Executive Director of the Dart USA**

Further comments:

- 'Fantastic, vital information'
- 'Very insightful, informative and useful for reporting-hope there are further sessions'
- 'Should be another one after the Royal Commission has started'
- 'Very informative and useful'



Additional information:

***Mindframe* staff:**

Marc Bryant, Tegan Cotterill, Jenyfer Locke, Kristy Platt & Alexandra Culloden

Handouts: 20 x media books
20 x media QRCs (suicide and self-harm)
20 x helpline QRCs

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