

Media alert

17 April 2025 | Please cascade to all media staff

Media reporting on people with mental illness

As two organisations working together on the *Mindframe* initiative to improve media reporting and reduce stigma around mental illness, SANE Australia and Everymind remind the media and organisations advocating in this space to take care with how people living with mental illness are framed.

The StigmaWatch program has received numerous reports from community members with concerns about current reporting on mental health concerns in relation to the upcoming Federal election, the Bondi Junction anniversary and forthcoming inquest, recent NSW psychiatrist resignations and doctor strikes, and broader mental health reforms.

Examples of recent reporting that has caused distress include:

- Correlating certain mental illnesses with violence, crime or reduced public safety.
- Labelling mental health care costs as a 'drain' or less worthy investment.
- Unnecessarily including a mental health diagnosis when not proven or relevant.
- Using graphic imagery, sensationalised description or offensive language to describe a person displaying mental health symptoms.
- Using mental health-related locations as settings without proper context or acknowledgement of people's experiences in those environments.
- Framing work with people with mental health concerns as dangerous or burdensome.
- Positioning people with mental illness as a problem that needs to be solved and dismissing their contributions to society.

Such framing can ultimately hurt the people we're seeking to support by reinforcing outdated and inaccurate stereotypes and driving negative community perceptions. The resulting stigma has profound consequences that leads to discrimination, exclusion and a reduction in help-seeking.

The media plays a critical role in reducing public stigma and discrimination and improving health outcomes. Thoughtful reporting on situations involving mental health can significantly improve the lives of millions of individuals, families and carers.

Recommendations for media in reporting on issues relating to mental illness:

- Remain mindful of the impact such reporting can have on those with similar experiences.
- Include comment from people with lived experience of mental health concerns wherever possible.
- Take care with language, including terms used to describe people with a lived experience.
- Carefully consider all imagery or footage, including locations for stills or interviews or b-roll accompanying reporting.
- Minimise use of mental illness or suicide as a story headline or lead.
- Refrain from linking mental illness to criminal situations without proof. Remember that people with mental illness are far more likely to be the victims of crime than the perpetrators.
- Ensure help seeking information is included with articles referring to mental illness.

Please refer to the [Mindframe guidelines: Reporting suicide and mental ill-health](#). Further language guidance can be found in the [Our words matter: Guidelines for language use](#) resource suite which includes a [quick reference card with examples of problematic and preferred language](#).

Support services

Evidence shows that people are more likely to seek help when appropriate services are included in stories referencing mental health concerns. It is vital to always include 24/7 support services, so the audience can reach out for support in a way that suits their individual needs.

This help card contains a range of services and resources that may be appropriate to include, depending on the story or issues you are covering.

Support services



Adult

Lifeline 13 11 14 | Text 0477 13 11 14 (24/7) | lifeline.org.au

13 YARN 13 92 76 | 13yarn.org.au
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service available 24/7

Suicide Call Back Service
1300 659 467 | suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Beyond Blue 1300 224 636 | beyondblue.org.au/forums

StandBy Support After Suicide 1300 727 247

QLife 1800 184 527 | qlife.org.au
LGBTIQ+ service available 3pm - midnight

MensLine 1300 78 99 78 | mensline.org.au

Youth

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800 | kidshelpline.com.au

headspace 1800 650 890 | headspace.org.au

ReachOut reachout.com.au

Other resources

Medicare Mental Health medicarementalhealth.gov.au

SANE online forums saneforums.org | 1800 187 236 (10am-10pm)

Embrace Multicultural Mental Health embracementalhealth.org.au

National Alcohol and other Drug Hotline 1800 250 185

National Gambling Helpline
1800 858 858 | gamblinghelponline.org.au

An  **EVERYMIND** program mindframe.org.au  @MindframeMedia.bsky.social  @MindframeMedia

Mindframe support for media

For free, personalised support in reporting safely on mental health concerns, call 02 4924 6900, visit mindframe.org.au or email mindframe@health.nsw.gov.au

Everymind would also like to remind all journalists and managers supporting journalists that covering these issues and stories can impact on the welfare of those reporting on them. Everymind, in consultation with the DART Centre Asia Pacific, provides [self-care tips for journalists](#) as well as advice for editors and line managers.

For accurate information on complex mental health conditions and stigma, as well as access to lived experience spokespeople and support services, go to www.sane.org.