

## CONTACTING THE MEDIA

If you see a media item which inappropriately or inaccurately reports on mental illness or suicide, or would like to congratulate the media on responsible reporting, SANE Australia encourages you to contact the media outlet directly (in addition to lodging a report with [StigmaWatch](#)).

### WHERE TO SEND YOUR COMMENTS

In general, a letter, email or fax is the most effective method of contacting the media because it is an exact record. You can also keep a copy to follow up if necessary. It also means you can send a copy to someone with more authority. For example, as well as complaining to a journalist who wrote an article, you could also send a copy to the editor of the magazine which published it. This is also a good idea when sending in praise, as the editor has final say over what is published and your comments may result in ongoing good news stories.

### Sample letters of complaint

[Sample complaint about mental illness stigma](#)

[Sample complaint about inappropriate reporting of suicide](#)

### Sample letters of praise

[Sample letter of praise about reporting of mental illness](#)

[Sample letter of praise about reporting of suicide](#)

### TIPS TO MAKE YOUR LETTER EFFECTIVE

#### Give accurate details

Include a summary of the reporting to which you are referring and exactly when and where it appeared.

#### Write clearly

If your letter can't be printed, try to make sure your writing is as easy to read as possible.

#### Be concise

Don't ramble on. People in the media are always in a hurry, and they're more likely to deal promptly with a letter that's short and to the point.

#### Be polite

When addressing a complaint, it's tempting to write an angry letter full of disgust and sarcasm. This can feel good at the time, but rarely achieves any results. It will just make the recipient angry and defensive. A polite letter – along the lines of 'I was saddened to see...' is more likely to get a sympathetic response and encourage the journalist to be more responsible in the future.

## **WHO TO CONTACT**

### **Newspapers and magazines**

Write or email the journalist who wrote the article and send a copy to the Editor. If you'd like your letter published, send a third copy to the Letters Editor.

### **TV and radio**

Write or email the person who made the remark or discussed the topic and send copies to the program's Producer and Executive Producer.

### **Advertisements**

Write or email the Chief Executive Officer of the company featured in the ad and send a copy to the media outlet where it appeared.

### **Websites**

Write or email the owner or manager of the website.

## **INDUSTRY BODIES**

Where a complaint is serious and doesn't receive a satisfactory reply, consider sending full details of your complaint and correspondence to the [relevant industry bodies](#).

SANE StigmaWatch monitors media portrayals of mental illness and suicide, to ensure they are accurate and respectful. SANE StigmaWatch is a program of the SANE Media Centre, which works in partnership with the National Media and Mental Health Group to provide expert advice to the Australian Government's Mindframe National Media Initiative.