

Every organisation that has contact with the media should have a media policy, a document that sets out how an organisation communicates with the media, and is consistent with the aims and position of the organisation. A media policy sets out a suggested code of conduct and standard operating procedures for media liaison.

Please find following a sample policy, which can be used as a template for developing one specific to your organisation.

Media liaison policy

This policy outlines the coordination of contact between the organisation and the media. It should apply to all staff at all times – 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is designed to ensure that in all dealings with the media, the organisation acts in a professional, coordinated manner and that all statements made are accurate and appropriate.

For the purposes of this policy, media contact includes: providing information via media releases or statements, letters to the editor, responding to media enquiries over the phone and via email, interviews or briefings, disclosing information to the media, comments on talkback radio, addressing a seminar or conference where the media are present, and media activities for events, reports, and launches.

Media relations strategy

- ⊙ All media relations activity will be undertaken with the recognition that the media play an important role in influencing social attitudes towards and perceptions of mental illness.
- ⊙ All media relations activity will aim to educate and raise awareness about mental illness and improve understanding and acceptance of mental illness in the community.
- ⊙ All proactive media contact will be consistent with the organisation's mission objectives, as outlined in its strategic plan.
- ⊙ All reactive media responses will be consistent with the organisation's area of expertise, as defined within the strategic plan.
- ⊙ All media relations activity will be consistent with the Australian Government's Mindframe *Guidelines for reporting mental illness and suicide*. See www.mindframe-media.info.

Responsibilities

- ⊙ **CEO**
The CEO is responsible for approving all external content for media including media releases, media statements and letters to the editor. The CEO will be the official spokesperson and will coordinate contact with the media through the Media Relations Manager, or other responsible person.
- ⊙ **Media Relations Manager**
The Media Relations Manager, or other responsible person, will cultivate relationships with journalists, field and filter media enquiries, and keep media contact records. Other responsibilities include drafting or coordination of media releases and statements and coordination of media interviews, media kits and background material; liaison with appropriate staff to coordinate responses to media issues, and alerting senior management to sensitive or controversial media issues relevant to the organisation.

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Staff

Non-media staff will not initiate media contact or respond directly to media enquiries. Staff will advise the Media Relations Manager or CEO of likely events, announcements or issues that may attract media interest, and ensure information provided to the Media Relations team is accurate.

General staff contacted by media

- If non-media staff are contacted directly by a journalist, they will request the journalist's name, contact details, publication or program deadline (date and time), topic, and what they are requesting – for example, an attributable quote, statement, or background briefing.
- This information should be passed promptly to the Media Relations Manager, and the journalist told that this will happen.

Media Contact

- All media enquiries will be referred to the Media Relations Manager immediately, and calls returned within one hour, if possible. If unable to comment, the journalist will be referred to an approved list of suitable organisations.
- All spokespeople will be briefed prior to interview and debriefed after. Journalists are to be treated respectfully and courteously by all staff at all times.
- Media responses should always be 'on the record'. They will be truthful and accurate, and not include speculation, guesswork or personal opinion. They will not include disparaging comments about other organisations or individuals.
- All media enquiries, and the organisation's responses, are to be logged by the Media Relations Manager.

Confidentiality

- Personal or contact details of staff, clients, spokespeople, ambassadors or board members will not be provided to the media without prior consent.
- The release of any information will remain consistent with the organisation's HR and confidentiality policies.

Media Releases

- Media releases will only be issued through the Media Relations Manager.
- If staff require the release of information to the media, they will contact the Media Relations Manager who will assist in drafting a media release or statement for approval by the CEO.

Issues Management

- All staff will report emerging issues of potential media and public sensitivity relating to the organisation to the immediate attention of the Media Relations Manager.
- The Media Relations Manager will work with the CEO and appropriate staff to develop a media response that is consistent with the organisation's media strategy and mission.