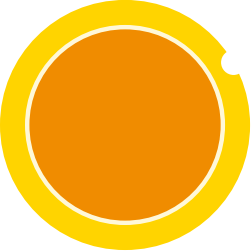


A background photograph of a press conference. Several people are visible, some holding cameras on tripods. In the foreground, a hand is holding a microphone with a black and orange foam cover. The scene is slightly blurred, focusing on the media equipment.

**RESPECTFUL
REPORTING:
VICTIMS OF
VIOLENT CRIME
MEDIA STRATEGY
2011 - 2012**



INTRODUCTION

Current data from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research identifies that violent crime is stable or falling in most categories however the potential for victims to be traumatised by stories in the media continues to be a challenge.

Respectful Reporting: Victims of Violent Crime Media Strategy promotes responsible reporting of violent crime and encourages the media to consider the potential impact that their report could have on a victim. The NSW Government, led by the NSW Department of Attorney General and Justice (DAGJ) will work in partnership with the media, Government and non-Government agencies and victims to achieve the goals of the strategy.

The *Respectful Reporting: Victims of Violent Crime Media Strategy* has been developed in consultation with DAGJ, Homicide Victims Support Group (Aus) Inc (HVSG), Victims of Crime Assistance League (VOCAL), Enough is Enough, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), as well as the Department of Human Services NSW – Ageing, Disability and Home Care and the Violence Prevention Coordination Unit, Office for Women's Policy, NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet, and provides key policy directions and priorities for the next two years.

The strategy has also been developed in collaboration with the Journalism Education Association of Australia (JEAA). We acknowledge the work they have already done in this area and look forward to continuing this collaborative approach.

BACKGROUND

Victims Services, DAGJ assists victims of crime to access services and entitlements to assist in their recovery. Victims Services is also tasked with assisting individual victims navigate the criminal justice system.

Victims Services convenes an Interagency Forum comprising representatives of a range of government and community agencies that provide services to victims of crime. The Interagency Forum is convened four times per year.

The primary objectives of the Interagency Forum are to:

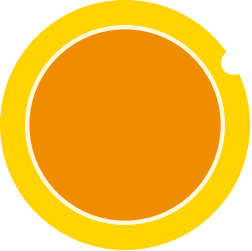
- discuss and monitor implementation of the Charter of Victims Rights,
- facilitate a 'whole of government' approach to the delivery of services to victims of crime,
- exchange information about services relevant to victims of crime, and
- discuss specific policy and operational issues relating to services to victims of crime.

At the September 2009 Interagency Forum concerns were raised regarding intrusive reporting, photographing and filming of victims of homicide and other violent crimes.

Consequently, a committee was formed to consider ways to address the issues related to how the media represent both victims of crime and report on crime in general. This committee worked with the JEAA to develop appropriate strategies to address current issues.

Other governments are facing similar issues, for example the Federal Government has committed to a similar project through *The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women; Domestic Violence Victoria* are undertaking a scoping exercise in relation to reporting violence against women; and Victim Support Australia have indicated that this is a national issue and are supportive of a progression of this work with NSW taking a lead role.





PROGRESS TO DATE: JOINT FORUMS

Due to the media's interest in crime and victims, an engagement with the media in ongoing dialogue is fundamental to the success of any strategy.

A forum was planned with two aims:

- 1) Providing the media with an insight into how reporting impacts on victims of crime.
- 2) Promoting a cooperative relationship between the media and support agencies to ensure victims who participate in interviews are supported and acknowledged.

The first forum – *Road to Recovery* – was held in May 2011.

During the course of the forum, it was agreed that the media plays a crucial role in ensuring the voices of victims and the impact of crime are heard, and that it is of critical importance that those reporting on the justice system treat victims with sensitivity and respect for their trauma and experiences.

Solutions agreed during the day included:

- providing legal and victims resources to the media, including support service contacts
- providing resources to victims that explain how to deal with the media and how it works
- organising contact with victims of crime for journalism students
- organising onsite training for practising journalists (similar to Mindframe – for mental health and suicide issues)
- promoting the Charter of Victims Rights more comprehensively
- working with media agencies to further develop ethics and practice codes in relation to working with vulnerable victims of crime
- developing more collaborative and trusting relationships between victim support and the media, including more contact, dialogue and forums like *Road to Recovery*.

This forum, the work of the committee to date, and the support and input of the JEAA, has led to the development of this strategic framework.

AIMS OF THE STRATEGY

Respectful Reporting: Victims of Violent Crime in NSW Media Strategy is designed to develop and improve awareness about the impact of crime on victims and the way in which the media may further exacerbate the challenges of living with trauma.

This is a national issue, and as most media organisations also operate nationally, the strategy impacts on jurisdictions outside NSW. It is recommended that all jurisdictions work together to achieve these aims.

This strategy has two key aims:

- A. To raise awareness in the media about both potential vulnerabilities of victims of violent crime and strategies they may be able to use to minimise their trauma.
- B. To provide resources to victims that explain how to deal with the media and how it works.



TACTICS

A. To raise awareness in the media about both potential vulnerabilities of victims of violent crime and strategies they may be able to use to minimise their trauma.

The following are the agreed strategies that came out of the *Road to Recovery* forum, and the tactics to be undertaken initially to progress them.

1. Providing legal and victims resources to the media, including support service contacts

Expansion of the Victims of Crime Clearinghouse website to include practical information to assist the media

Victims Services will develop an addition to the current Victims of Crime Clearinghouse website as a resource for media professionals.

This online companion will be a resource to assist and inform media professionals of the need for appropriate reporting of victims of crime and to minimise harm such as re-traumatisation. The resource will also provide local and international research documents to support the need for more appropriate reporting and to allow victims of crime to empower themselves in engaging with the media directly.

The website will outline changes to the extent, nature and quality of media reporting in NSW and will provide updates to legislative changes to various acts which impact upon the lives of victims of crime.

2. Organising contact with victims of crime for journalism students

Improve education for journalists and journalism students on victimology and the challenges of reporting issues related to crime

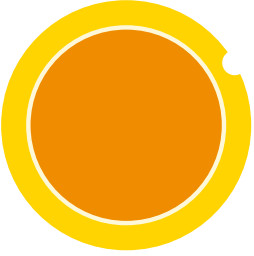
Victims Services will work with the JEA to develop a relevant curriculum and resources for journalism education.

The purpose is to instil a greater awareness of the impact of crime not only on individuals, but also within family units and in the wider community.

Some of the key areas of the curriculum will address:

- victimology education about the re-traumatisation of victims of crime;
- education on the Charter of Victims Rights within the *Victims Rights Act 1996*.
- an introduction to the scope of services available by government and non-government agencies for anyone who becomes a victim of crime.

It is proposed that the curriculum will be presented at campuses for undergraduate students undertaking communication and journalism degrees. Lectures will most likely be provided by academic staff from legal, criminology and psycho/social disciplines, as well as personnel engaged in working with victims of violent crime.



3. Organising training for practising journalists (similar to Mindframe – for mental health and suicide issues)

Expansion of the Victims of Crime Clearinghouse website to include practical information to assist the media

See above – the website will include training resources for media professionals.

4. Promoting the Charter of Victims Rights more comprehensively

Introduction and dissemination of relevant referral information for victims of crime at the end of media reports

At present information provided at the end of reports in relation to suicide and mental illness generally include accurate details of help lines to assist people in accessing assistance.

Guidelines already adopted for reporting on patients with mental illness and suicide may be replicated when reporting about victims of violent crime to assist in raising awareness about support services.

At the conclusion of television, radio and newspaper reports, a reference to victim support services such as the Victims Access Line, NSW Rape Crisis Centre or the Community Services Domestic Violence Line, may be beneficial to the community to enable victims of crime to access appropriate assistance when required. Victims Services will assist the media in ensuring that relevant support providers are aware of the placement of their details and that the service is able to provide appropriate response to any victims who may contact them following the publication of articles or news reports.

5. Working with media agencies to further develop ethics and practice codes in relation to working with vulnerable victims of crime

Collaboration with the Australian Press Council (APC), Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), the Journalism Education Association of Australia (JEA), and all major media organisations

Victims Services will engage with all major media organisations and umbrella groups to discuss the aims of this strategy and to explore ways in which current or revised guidelines and media codes may better support victims of crime.

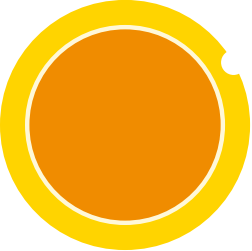
Media organisations to be involved include:

- ABC and SBS
- Fairfax
- News Limited
- Channels 7, 9 and 10
- Sky and other pay television stations

Current journalism guidelines and codes of ethics address to some extent the sensitivities of vulnerable individuals but further work will address the impact of re-traumatising for victims of crime.

Investigate academic grants for building evidence on the impacts of victims reporting

Victims Services will also develop research programs in partnership with academia aimed at building evidence on the impacts of victims reporting.



6. Developing more collaborative and trusting relationships between victim support and the media, including more contact, dialogue and forums like Road to Recovery.

Collaborate on forums and education

Joint forums and other opportunities for building a continuing and productive dialogue between victims support agencies and the media will be made a priority. It is envisaged that the *Road to Recovery* forum will be repeated annually to ensure all interested parties continue to strengthen relationships.

B. Providing resources to victims that explain how to deal with the media and how it works

Produce a Victims Media Guide

Victims Services will develop a guide for victims to assist in their contact with the media following a traumatic event.

The guide will assist victims and their families to decide how they would like to participate with the media following a traumatic event. The guide will also assist those who want contact with the media about a matter they believe is worthy of publicity.

The guide will ensure that victims are aware of how their comments and interactions with the media may be portrayed, so that they are able to consider what level of involvement they will have. It will also provide contact details to ensure they are able to access relevant support services.

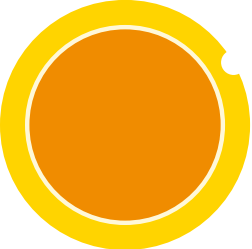
MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Targeted data collection and research about the ways in which crime is reported from a multimedia perspective will be undertaken. Victims Services in conjunction with other NSW victim support agencies will be responsible for undertaking research and an evaluation of the strategy. Following the implementation of the *Respectful Reporting: Victims of Violent Crime in NSW Media Strategy*, victims of crime who access support from victim support agencies will be provided with a brief survey. This process will be ongoing and coordinated by Victims Services. Crime reporters will also be invited to participate in a separate survey. An evaluation will measure victim satisfaction, stakeholder feedback and address key performance indicators. The evaluation will assess:

- the number of crime-related incidents covered by the media
- whether there has been an increase in the sensitivity of reports on victims of violent crime
- victims satisfaction with media reports of their case
- victims satisfaction with the assistance provided to them by victim support agencies and police in matters involving the media
- stakeholder satisfaction with the strategy and media coverage.

A report of each survey will be published and made available to the media and other key stakeholders at ongoing forums. The information obtained will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy, uncover deficiencies and assist the Media Advisory and Monitoring Committee to develop continual improvement strategies and to achieve more effective outcomes for victims of crime and the media.





ACTION TABLE

A. To raise awareness amongst media outlets about the potential vulnerabilities of victims of violent crime and the strategies they may be able to utilise to minimise the trauma that an individual may be experiencing.

Project	Partners	Time frames	Product/Other
Collaboration with the APC, ACMA, the JEAA, and all major media organisations	VS, APCA, MCA, JEAA, ABC, FreeTV, Other media orgs	Guidelines to be reviewed and completed by June 2012	Development or amendment of current guidelines that balances public interest and victims support needs
Expansion of the VS Clearinghouse website to include practical information to assist the media	VS, HVSG, VOCAL, Enough is Enough, DADHC, DJAG media, ODPP media, APC	Feb 2012	Tools published on Victims of Crime Clearinghouse website
Introduction and dissemination of relevant referral information for victims of crime at the end of media reports.	VS, JEAA	Feb 2012	Media quick reference card Resources on Victims of Crime Clearinghouse website
Improve education for journalists and journalism students on victimology and the challenges of reporting issues related to crime	VS, Media Advisory Monitoring Committee, UNSW, JEAA	For academic year 2012	Victimology module included in course with the potential for the course to be replicated with other universities in Australia
Investigate academic grants for building evidence on the impacts of victims reporting	VS, JEAA	June 2012	Grant applications
Collaborate on forums and education	VS Interagency Forum, media organisations	Ongoing	

B. To provide information to victims of violent crime to support them in their dealings with the media.

Project	Partners	Time frames	Product/Other
Produce a Victims Media Guide	VS, HVSG, VOCAL, Enough is Enough, DADHC, DJAG media, ODPP media	Launched Nov 2011	Media information, Publication for victims of crime

Evaluation

Project	Partners	Time frames	Product/Other
Evaluation of the Media Strategy	VS, JEAA	First evaluation Dec 2012	Evaluation reports presented at media forums and other occasions when required