

Sample complaint about stigma against mental illness

Ms Georgie Smart
Radio Alpha
PO BOX A24
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Ms Smart

I am writing to complain about the misuse of the word 'schizophrenic' in your program on 14 October at around 10 AM. It was stated that a tennis-player had a 'schizophrenic' lifestyle because he spends one half of the year in Queensland and the other half in Miami. ❶

While it may seem trivial, the persistent misuse of 'schizophrenic' in the media perpetuates the myth that schizophrenia means a 'Jekyll-and-Hyde' type split personality. This is simply not the case. In fact, schizophrenia is a serious medical condition which affects the functioning of the brain and is highly distressing to the one in a hundred Australians who experience it. ❷

As someone who has had schizophrenia for over 20 years, and who regularly enjoys your program, I would appreciate it if you would not use the term in this way in the future. ❸

To find out more about schizophrenia, visit www.sane.org – the website of SANE Australia, the mental health charity – which also monitors stigma in the media. ❹

I look forward to your response. ❺

Yours sincerely

Ron Costa

cc
SANE StigmaWatch ❻

- ❶ Get straight to the point with your complaint.
- ❷ Give full details of the item you wish to complain about.
- ❸ Explain why the item was inaccurate, inappropriate or hurtful to people with a mental illness. Back this up with a relevant fact or two (see SANE's Factsheets, available from www.sane.org, for facts about mental illness).
- ❹ Politely request they write more accurately and respectfully in the future.
- ❺ Refer them to the SANE website for more information.
- ❻ Make clear that you expect a response.
- ❼ Note that you have copied your complaint to SANE StigmaWatch.

SANE StigmaWatch

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.

Tel 03 9682 5933

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www.sane.org

Visit the SANE website for information about mental illness and related issues.