

Sample complaint about inappropriate reporting of suicide

Ms Georgie Smart
Alpha News
PO BOX A24
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Ms Smart

I am writing to complain about the reporting of a recent case of suicide in *Alpha News*, 14 October, page 2. The report gave a detailed account of the location and method used, with the headline 'Eighties' Rock Star Finds Peace at Last'. ①

As the Australian Government guidelines, *Reporting Mental Illness and Suicide*, make clear, research indicates that giving such details may lead to 'copycat' attempts by those who are vulnerable, or may encourage them to regard suicide as an acceptable way of dealing with a problem. This does not mean that the issue should not be reported, but that reporting should be responsible. ②

As someone who regularly reads and values *Alpha News*, I would appreciate it if you would report on suicide more thoughtfully in future. ③

For a copy of the *Reporting Mental Illness and Suicide*, guidelines, see the Mindframe website at www.mindframe-media.info. You may also be interested to visit www.sane.org – the website of SANE Australia, the mental health charity – where the StigmaWatch program promotes responsible reporting of mental illness and suicide in the media. ④

I look forward to your response. ⑤

Yours sincerely

R. on Costa

cc
SANE StigmaWatch ⑥

- ① Get straight to the point with your complaint.
- ② Give full details of the item you wish to complain about.
- ③ Explain that the reporting of suicide was inappropriate, and give reasons why.
- ④ Politely request they write more accurately and respectfully in the future.
- ⑤ Refer them to Mindframe and the *Reporting Suicide and Mental Illness guidelines*, as well as the SANE website, and note that you have copied your complaint to SANE StigmaWatch.
- ⑥ Make clear that you expect a response.
- ⑦ 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.

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