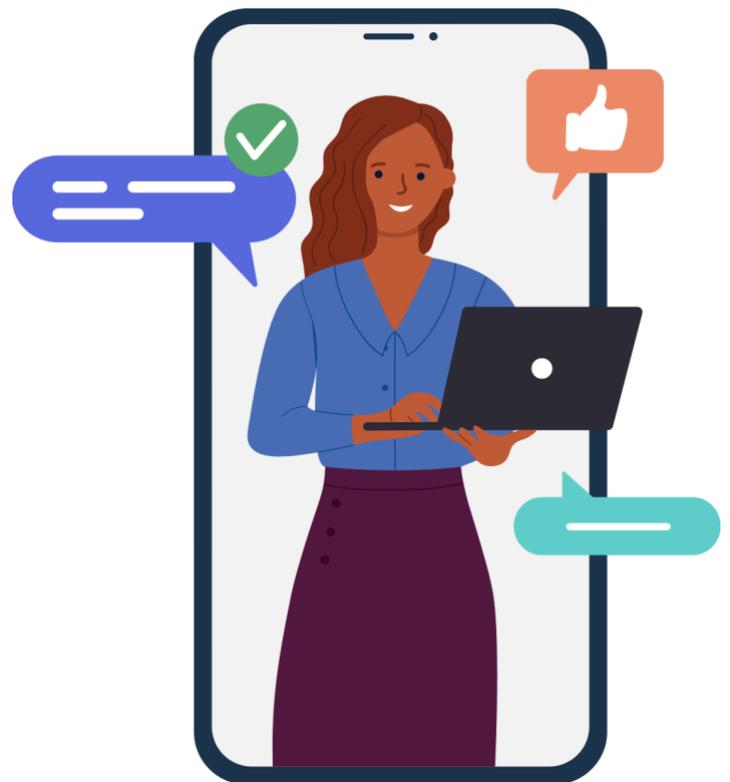




# Guide to engaging with the media

Creating safer online environments



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## Why has this guide been produced?

This resource provides guidance on engaging with the media following an online safety incident. The media play an important role in shaping social attitudes and perceptions. However, schools have little or no control over what gets published or broadcast. There may be significant media interest when a critical online incident occurs at a school.

This advice should be read alongside school and/or education sector policies and procedures.

## Considerations for engaging the media

As part of school planning processes, consider:	Yes	Comments
Does our school and/or education sector have policies or guidelines for media relations and enquiries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Does our school and/or education sector media relations policy specifically address online safety incidents?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are all school staff members aware of the relevant policy and what to do if approached?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do we have clear processes for when the media contact the school, including in person, by email, via phone, messaging service or on social media)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Does our school and/or education sector have a central point of contact for media requests?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
If contacted by the media during or after an online safety incident, consider:	Yes	Comments
Is engaging with the media in the best interests of the student/s and families involved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Has the student/s and their families been consulted about media interactions? Be mindful that in times of crisis, families may have reduced capacity to consent and may require advocacy from a skilled practitioner. It is important that people know they can choose NOT to speak with the media.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have we protected the privacy of those involved, for example, schools must never share home addresses or personal contact details for staff, parents/carers, or students?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have we considered any possible future legal issues and actions (e.g. defamation or breach of privacy) if we engage with the media?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Will engaging with the media compromise any police or other investigations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have we contacted the relevant media unit/team in the school and/or education sector for guidance, particularly around briefing the school community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>If engaging with the media, have you:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Contacted the relevant media unit/team in the school and/or education sector?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Prepared key information for the media unit/team that sum up the key facts: what happened and what is being done about it, while ensuring privacy of everyone involved is protected?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Avoided labelling, stereotypes, sensationalist language and identifying those involved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alerted relevant school community members that the media have been in contact and the nature of that contact, if known?	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Remember:**

Regardless of whether a school decides to engage with the media, journalists may wait outside the school and try to interview staff, parents/carers and students. School community members should be made aware of this and advised about respecting and upholding the privacy, wellbeing, and rights of the students and families impacted.

The media may choose to publish a story even if the school declines to comment or publish correspondence with the school. Whether the school engages or not, support should be provided for those impacted by the media's interest. If incorrect or identifying information is reported, contact your school and/or education sector key media contacts for advice and support.

**Mindframe**, funded by the Australian Government's Department of Health, is a national program supporting safe media reporting, portrayal and communication about suicide, mental health concerns, alcohol and other drugs, and eating disorders. They have developed a suite of evidence-based guidelines to assist media reporting and other public communication about these serious issues. These resources can be found here: [Guidelines - Mindframe](#).