

Managing media interest

here
for
you

This guide offers you some helpful tips to make informed decisions about dealing with the media.

When the media is interested in your story

A crime, unexpected death, or serious incident can quickly become public information when the media shares details about what's happened. Newspapers, TV, internet, radio, magazines, and social media can all play a part in spreading the story, or a part of it, far and wide.

In some instances, such as after a suicide, family violence and harm, sexual violence, or homicide, a judge may decide to suppress the names of victims, the person accused, or details of the case. This means no media can report on these.

After a very serious crime, the police may offer to work with you to release a media statement.

In other situations, anyone from a media organisation could contact you, your family, whānau, friends, acquaintances, and even people you barely know to ask for details, comments, or an interview. If they do contact you, it is your decision as to whether you wish to speak to them.

Sometimes the media can have a positive role in assisting with enquiries - if you or family members are asked to make a formal public request for more information about the incident. Occasionally journalists also independently investigate a case and find helpful new evidence.

However, it pays to assume the media do not have your best interests in mind. Some victims find journalists persistent, demanding, and manipulative when they are searching for details about a story. Their attention may be intrusive, distressing and they sometimes find inventive ways to discover more information, including staking out homes, hospitals, and workplaces, or taking pictures from social media accounts without asking.

Be aware that you might also unexpectedly hear, read, or see something in the media about your case or incident that is extremely upsetting.

Tips for dealing with media attention

These tips come from those who have experienced how challenging it can be to deal with media interest in their story. Your Victim Support Worker is your first point of contact for assistance and will support you with any of these steps. If you need further assistance you can phone us on **0800 842 846**, 24/7. We are here for you.

Consider appointing someone else to deal with media on your behalf

You can pass all media queries onto this person to deal with as you choose.

Use your voice mail or text messages to filter all your calls

This way you don't accidentally answer a call from someone you don't want to speak to, and you can choose to return the call when, and if, you are ready to.

Use social media wisely

Social media can be mis-used. Any information or photos shared openly on social media, messaging apps or text messages can be used by media as public information. Members of the public can make comments on posts that might be insensitive and upsetting. Children and young people should be discouraged from viewing or replying to such comments.

If you decide not to speak to the media:

- You can simply ignore requests. It's okay to tell them you have "no comment" or ask them to direct all queries to police.

CONTACT

Victim Support

Get Help: 0800 VICTIM (0800 842 846)
enquiries@victimsupport.org.nz
victimsupport.org.nz


Victim Support
Manaaki Tāngata



- It may be easier to decline to comment by using text or email, where this is possible, as journalists can still keep pushing you for an answer if you are talking over the phone.
- Understand that even if you choose not to comment, it may not be possible to stop the media reporting on your case.

If you do decide to speak to the media:

- Don't feel you need to answer straight away. You can tell the journalist you're busy right now and set up a time for an interview later. Ask them to email an outline of their questions to you first so you will have time to consider your answers in advance.
- Decide carefully what information you *do* want to share with the public and what you *don't* want to share before you talk with the media. Where applicable, discuss this as a family or whānau.
- You might choose to issue a written statement only. After very serious crimes, the police can help you with this. But after any incident, you can always post a statement to a social media account and refer media to your statement.
- Choose who will speak to media on behalf of you and your family or whānau. This could be you, another member of your family or whānau, or a trusted friend. Spend time with them first to ensure they know what you want to say. If you decide to speak to the media yourself, give yourself time to carefully think through what you want to say.
- Always assume your interview is being recorded. If you are not comfortable with that, tell the journalist before your interview.
- Don't let the media rush you. If you feel pressured, say you will call or message them back or have someone else do that on your behalf. You can also delay an interview you've already arranged if you need to.
- There is no such thing as 'off the record'. Media can use anything you say at any time. Avoid saying anything in the spur of the moment that you might later regret.
- If you do give an interview, you do not have the right to see or approve what is produced before it's made public. You can ask, but it's over to the media person you are dealing with. Families and whānau can feel angry their words have been twisted or misconstrued so planning what you want to say is very important.
- You can choose to be proactive and set up interviews with the media at a time you choose such as around upcoming anniversaries or when the family or whānau

want to highlight an aspect of the case. This allows you to get ahead of the media and do it on your own terms.

- Think carefully about which photos, written documents/messages, audio, or video you may want to give to media. It's very important to know that any of these could be used by them in the future – without your additional permission.
- Ask police to tell you about media releases they are making about your case or situation *before* they release them to the media.
- Incorrect information given to the media by relatives, friends, or others can be infuriating and hurtful. If this happens, you can ask the media to correct any misinformation. Please understand though, sometimes these people pass on information that is factual or their opinion.

Media attention may increase again at any time. Use these tips when you need to.

Complaints

There are laws and guidelines governing what journalists can and cannot report on.

Victims of sexual violence and children are protected from being identified by the media. In some other cases, the prosecutor may ask the court to prevent identification of other witnesses who are vulnerable.

To find out more or lodge a complaint, see the Media Council's website – www.mediacouncil.org.nz.

If media pressure is getting too much

Media can be persistent and resourceful. If you have further concerns and questions, talk with police or the Victim Support Worker assigned to your case. You can call us 24/7 on **0800 842 846** to be connected with a Support Worker.

You could also talk with the Police Officer in charge of your case if media pressure has become too intrusive and demanding.



**Our service is
free, personal,
and confidential**

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