



COMMERCIAL RADIO  
AUSTRALIA

# Commercial Radio Guidelines

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**Commercial Radio Australia Limited ACN 059 731 467**

# GUIDELINES

**COMMERCIAL RADIO BROADCASTERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO USE THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES WHEN PRODUCING CONTENT.**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THESE GUIDELINES DO NOT FORM PART OF THE COMMERCIAL RADIO CODE OF PRACTICE.**

Broadcasts of Emergency Information

Portrayal of Indigenous Australians

Portrayal of Women

Portrayal of Suicide and Mental Illness

Responsible reporting of domestic violence

# GUIDELINES ON BROADCASTS OF EMERGENCY INFORMATION

**These guidelines are to assist in defining an emergency and identifying appropriate emergency service organisations – these guidelines do not form part of the Code.**

## **Guidelines**

An emergency is generally regarded as a situation in which there is an imminent or actual threat within the community, where life and/or property are at risk and which requires a significant and coordinated response by emergency or essential service organisations.

A range of emergency and essential service organisations will be relevant for each licence area.

As a general guide, emergency or essential service organisations include Police, Fire, Rural Fire Service, Ambulance, State Emergency Service (SES), water, port or health authorities and the Bureau of Meteorology.

The licensee and appropriate emergency or essential service organisations in the licence area should jointly identify, develop and maintain effective lines of communication.

A licence area may have an Emergency Management Committee/Counter Disaster Council or equivalent organisation formed under State/Territory legislation, which is responsible for issuing guidelines to identify key emergency organisations and procedures for broadcasting emergency information. If so, it may be useful to become familiar with such guidelines and procedures.

# GUIDELINES ON THE PORTRAYAL OF INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS ON COMMERCIAL RADIO

**These guidelines are to assist in defining acceptable practice in the portrayal of indigenous Australians on commercial radio – these guidelines do not form part of the Code.**

## Guidelines

1. A broadcaster should avoid prejudicial or belittling references to indigenous Australians. This includes undue emphasis on the person's ethnicity.
2. It is not up to a broadcaster to question a person's aboriginality or indigenous status. Broadcasters should not refer to 'full' or 'part' when describing a person's aboriginality.
3. Media reports about indigenous Australians should respect the protocols of the relevant indigenous Australian groups, particularly when dealing with deceased individuals.
4. Care should be exercised in depicting problems encountered by indigenous Australian communities to achieve a balanced approach that does not unduly emphasise negative aspects to the exclusion of positive developments (e.g. descriptions of problems could usefully include efforts being made by the people themselves to resolve them).
5. As part of this balance, where material is broadcast that:
  - reports on a negative aspect of indigenous Australian(s), and
  - draws attention to the person or group being indigenous Australians:the broadcaster should use reasonable endeavours to give the person or group an opportunity to reply to the material, and should broadcast any such reply.
6. The positive portrayal of indigenous Australians in programs and news media should ideally assist such communities to:
  - maintain and pass on to their cultures and traditions; and
  - facilitate an understanding of indigenous Australians' cultures.

## Explanatory Notes

The Guidelines can be assisted by the initiation of programs which sensitise non-indigenous journalists and program-makers to the values of indigenous people.

Broadcasters should be particularly careful not to reinforce negative stereotypes and generalisations relating to indigenous Australians.

Broadcasters can contact the Australian Indigenous Communications Association (**AICA**) for assistance on specific questions.

## Terminology

It is acceptable to refer to indigenous Australians, Aboriginal people or Torres Strait islanders (as appropriate). It is also acceptable to refer to indigenous Australians by their regional identification (e.g. Koori people). Broadcasters should avoid referring to an indigenous person as 'an Aborigine'.

Please contact AICA to determine the correct regional identification and acceptable terminology when referring to indigenous people. If there is any doubt, please check with a second source, to avoid causing offence.

## Other common terminology

<b>Aboriginal</b>	See Aborigine. The word "Aboriginal" is an adjective used to describe something associated with Aborigines.
<b>Aboriginality</b>	The qualities inherent in being an Aborigine relating to Aboriginal heritage and culture.
<b>Aborigine</b>	An Indigenous person of Australia. Descendant of the first inhabitants of Australia with a living history spanning more than 40,000 years. The word "Aborigine" is a noun which also refers to any Indigenous person, but is not a popular term (see earlier reference).
<b>Racism</b>	Less favourable treatment of a person or group on the basis of race and discriminatory behaviour towards, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of, any person or group on the basis of race.
<b>Sacred Site</b>	A tract of land that has strong religious meaning to all or some Aboriginal people.
<b>Site of Significance</b>	A tract of land that has strong meaning to all or some Aboriginal people but may not have strong religious meaning.
<b>Torres Strait Islander</b>	A person of Torres Strait island descent living in or coming from the group of islands between the Northern Australian and New Guinea coasts.

**Visitors Permit** A permit to enter designated Aboriginal areas. Obtained from Aboriginal Community Councils or Land Councils.

## **Unacceptable terminology**

The following terms are offensive to Aboriginal people and should be avoided. The alternatives are listed.

**Abo, Abbo** Aboriginal person, Indigenous Australian, Koori (NSW, Murri (QLD), etc

**Boong/Black** See Abo

**Gin** Aboriginal woman, Aboriginal person, Koori, etc

**Half-Caste/Quarter-Caste**

**Part/Full-Blood** Concepts used by non-Aborigines to divide Aborigines. The definition of Aborigine relates to self-identification and acceptance by the Aboriginal community. Degrees of descent are irrelevant and act against the solidarity of Aboriginal people.

**Lubra** See Gin

**Native**

# GUIDELINES AND EXPLANATORY NOTES ON THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN ON COMMERCIAL RADIO

**These guidelines are to assist in defining acceptable practice in the portrayal of women on commercial radio – these guidelines do not form part of the Code.**

Women represent half of the Australian population. Broadcasters should represent women fairly and accurately, and should recognise changes in women's attitudes and evolving role in society.

## Guidelines

In the portrayal of women on commercial radio, broadcasters should avoid promoting or endorsing inaccurate, demeaning or discriminatory descriptions of women. In particular:

1. Do not place undue emphasis on gender.
2. Avoid the stereotyping of gender roles or characteristics. Avoid language that associates particular roles, behaviour, characteristics, attributes or products to people on the basis of gender.
3. Avoid language that excludes or gives unequal treatment to women. For example, use:
  - leader/chair not chairman;
  - police officer not policeman;
  - fire fighter not fireman;
  - sales representative not salesman; and
  - business executive not businessman
4. Ensure that reporting and on air discussions respect the dignity of women and are non-exploitive. For example:
  - avoid expressions that infer that a person is inferior because she is a woman, or that men have exclusivity, i.e. "that's a man's job" or "a woman wouldn't understand that", "it's a man's world";
  - avoid the use of overt sexual references in relation to a woman's physical characteristics; and
  - remember that the tone of voice used can also cause offence.
5. Recognise the changing roles of women and men in society.
6. Endeavour to achieve a balance in the use of women and men as experts and give equal prominence to the achievements of women.

# GUIDELINES AND EXPLANATORY NOTES ON THE PORTRAYAL OF SUICIDE AND MENTAL ILLNESS ON COMMERCIAL RADIO

**These guidelines are to assist in defining acceptable practice in the portrayal of people suffering from mental illness and in the broadcast of incidents of suicide on commercial radio – these guidelines do not form part of the Code.**

Approximately 2,500 Australians die by suicide each year and about one in five people will experience a mental illness at some stage in their lives.

The Code is designed to provide appropriate community safeguards by prohibiting licensees from broadcasting programs on suicide that are irresponsible or programs that are derogatory towards, or stigmatise people with, mental illness.

## **Guidelines**

### **Portrayal of Suicide**

In programs about or relating to suicide, stations should avoid depicting suicide favourably or presenting it as a means of achieving a desired result.

**Check that the language used does not glamorise or sensationalise suicide, or present suicide as a solution to problems.**

For example, it would be better to use “non-fatal” rather than “unsuccessful” when describing a suicide attempt and “increasing rates” rather than “suicide epidemic” when describing rates of suicide. Research shows that over-use of the word suicide may normalise the act.

**Avoid an approach which glamorises or sensationalises celebrity suicide.**

Celebrity suicides usually attract a lot of public attention. Higher rates of suicide have sometimes been recorded after celebrity suicides which received prominent coverage. If a celebrity suicide is reported, care should be taken to ensure that any description of the method used is disclosed only if there is a public interest in providing that information.

**Exclude detailed descriptions about method of suicide.**

Stations should broadcast reports of suicide or attempted suicide only where there is a public interest reason to do so and should exclude any detailed descriptions of the method of suicide or attempted suicide. Such reports should be straightforward and should not include graphic details. Research shows that there may be some correlation between the reporting of methods of suicide and ‘copycat suicides’.

### **Portrayal of Mental Illness**

Studies have shown that the negative portrayal of mental illness impacts significantly on people experiencing mental illness and may influence community attitudes, which in turn may lead to stigmatisation and discrimination against people with mental illness.

In the portrayal of mental illness on commercial radio, licensees should avoid broadcasting a program that stigmatises or vilifies people in the community who are living with a mental illness,

**Avoid the use of certain derogatory terminology.**

Terms such as “cracked up”, “nutcase”, “psycho” and “lunatic asylum” stigmatise and may perpetuate discrimination against people suffering with mental illness. Language that implies mental illness is a life sentence should be avoided – e.g. a person is not “a schizophrenic”, rather, they are experiencing or being treated for schizophrenia. In addition, care should be taken to ensure medical terms are not used out of context – e.g. “psychotic dog”, “schizophrenic economy”.

**Remember that people with a mental illness are not inherently violent, unable to work, weak or unable to get well.**

There are some negative misconceptions about mental illness in the community and radio programs should avoid reinforcing these misconceptions.

Research indicates that people receiving treatment for a mental illness are no more violent or dangerous than the general population and when unwell are more likely to harm themselves than others. In addition, most people with a mental illness recover well with appropriate treatment and support – they work, they have families and contribute to society in many ways.

**Recommended resources and further information**

*Reporting Suicide and Mental Illness: A Resource for Media Professionals.* (Commonwealth Government) 2002, 2004.

The resource is available on-line at [www.mindframe-media.info](http://www.mindframe-media.info) or by contacting Auseinet, c/o CAMHS, Flinders Medical Centre, Bedford Park, South Australian, 5042. Telephone: (08) 8201 7670.

Listeners seeking help can be referred to Lifeline 13 11 14 (suicide) or and SANE Australia 1800 68 83 82 (mental illness) or to a GP or health care professional.

# GUIDELINES AND EXPLANATORY NOTES ON THE RESPONSIBLE REPORTING OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON COMMERCIAL RADIO

**These guidelines are to assist in defining acceptable practice in the portrayal of family violence on commercial radio – these guidelines do not form part of the Code.**

These Guidelines are based on the guidelines developed by Our Watch ([www.ourwatch.org.au](http://www.ourwatch.org.au)).

Domestic violence is a serious problem in Australia. When you are reporting on domestic violence, you can help listeners to see it as an important issue on which everyone can take action. Remember: you can report on this issue in a way that informs, educates, and contributes usefully to public dialogue.

## **Name it**

Always use the term ‘domestic violence’ when it applies. Using language like ‘domestic dispute’, ‘volatile relationship’ or ‘bashing’ minimises and trivialises a violent situation. If your audience consistently comes across this term they will get a better understanding of the extent of the problem.

## **Safety comes first**

Ensure that you report on the issue in a way that does not compromise the survivor’s safety. This might involve leaving out some details about what occurred in order to protect the survivor’s anonymity.

This may also affect the way you use identifying features in a story. At times you may need to avoid using a survivor’s name or remove town names. Wherever possible check with a survivor to see what they consent and feel safe to disclose. If that is not possible, consider whether what you broadcast might put them at risk.

## **Know the law**

Be aware that there are certain legal parameters that outline what you can and cannot report in a situation where a protection order of some kind has been issued, or where there are children involved.

## **Violence is never acceptable**

The perpetrator is always solely responsible for a violent situation. Avoid using language or framing the story in a way that suggests the survivor of violence was in any way to blame for what happened to him or her.

## **Domestic violence is serious and life-threatening**

It is never appropriate to report on domestic violence in a way that sensationalises or trivialises it.

### **Acknowledge that this crime has both a victim and a perpetrator**

Domestic violence is sometimes reported with headlines like 'Woman assaulted', or with stories that focus only on what happened to the survivor. This can suggest that violence is something that 'just happens' to women. Emphasise that someone perpetrated this violence, and that it was a crime.

### **Take the emphasis away from 'stranger danger'**

Most violence against women is perpetrated by somebody known to the survivor. Where there is a relationship between the survivor and the perpetrator, acknowledge it (if you are able to). Get the balance of stories right, over-reporting, or giving greater prominence to stories about attacks from a stranger misrepresents the problem.

### **Use sensitivity and good judgement when reporting survivors' stories**

The emotional impacts of domestic violence often include feelings of intense shame and vulnerability. Make sure you do all you can to report on domestic violence in a way that upholds the survivor's right to dignity, remembering that there might be trauma associated even with an incident that occurred many years ago.

When interviewing survivors, give them as much time as possible to tell their story, check with them a couple of times to ensure you have consent to disclose elements of their story, and where possible, give them the opportunity to review the content.

### **Contextualise the story with statistics**

Use local, national, and (where appropriate) international statistics on domestic violence to frame the story.

### **Domestic violence has a significant gendered dimension**

Acknowledge that domestic violence is not just a one-off incident. It occurs in a broader context in which power and resources are distributed unequally between genders, and in which women are much more likely to be victims of violence than men.

### **Humanise the story with appropriate terminology**

Where possible, and only where consent has been given, refer to the survivor of violence by name. If that's not appropriate, be as specific as you can – for example, 'woman who has been a victim of domestic violence'. The term 'survivor' is also used for people who have experienced domestic violence in the past.

**It is important to include information about available support options for people who have experienced domestic violence. You should always include numbers for local support services where possible.**

### **Call on community experts for comment**

Do not just rely on the police or the judiciary for comment when reporting on domestic violence. Community experts on domestic violence will be able to put the issue in context.