



# **The Role of the Media in Encouraging Men to Seek Help for Depression or Anxiety**

**Final Report**

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## Main messages

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- The media has a strong impact on the public's perceptions of mental illness.
- Men report a lower rate of depression and/or anxiety than women, and they seek help at a much lower rate.
- Promoting help-seeking amongst men for depression and/or anxiety is fundamental to improving men's mental health.
- The language and focus of a newsprint story about depression and/or anxiety has a real impact on men with depression and/or anxiety.
- Men can be encouraged to seek help for depression and/or anxiety through the use of media campaigns that work to increase symptom recognition, reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking. Men are also encouraged to seek help by disclosures of depression and/or anxiety by celebrities, or those men can easily identify with, that have an optimistic focus on recovery.
- National helplines have a role to play in assisting men to seek help and find service pathways for the treatment of depression and/or anxiety.
- Some work is still needed to improve the reporting of depression and/or anxiety in newsprint. In particular, helplines should always be mentioned in articles that feature depression and/or anxiety. Articles featuring depression and/or anxiety should also maintain an optimistic focus on recovery wherever possible.

## Executive summary

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The media is the public's primary source of information on mental illness<sup>1-3</sup> and plays an important role in shaping people's perceptions and stigma about mental illness.<sup>4 5</sup> The media can have a strong influence on people's behaviour in relation to mental illness and has the potential to promote help-seeking. This study aimed to explore the impact of newsprint stories on men's help-seeking behaviour.

The study drew on social cognitive theory<sup>6 7</sup> as a potential explanation for the psychological process behind the phenomenon of help-seeking for depression and/or anxiety in response to newsprint stories. Social cognitive theory postulates that the more we see others, especially those we revere or identify with, modeling successful behaviour, the more our self-efficacy increases and the more incentive we have for behaviour change (such as help-seeking).

Although there is evidence that reporting of mental illness in Australia is improving over time,<sup>3</sup> the news media continue to tend to portray mental illness in a way that promotes stigma and/or perpetuates myths about mental illness.<sup>3</sup> This is likely to have a negative impact on help-seeking. Little is known about whether constructive or affirming media stories about mental illness actually have a positive effect on people's behaviour.<sup>8</sup>

The media's role in encouraging help-seeking behaviour may be particularly important for men with mental health problems. Men's reluctance to access health services has been cited as a key issue associated with improving men's health, and encouraging men's help-seeking behaviour is therefore an important focus for research and health policy.<sup>9</sup>

This study explored whether there is a relationship between constructive and affirming (positive) newsprint stories about depression and/or anxiety in men and the use of helpline services by men.

The study posed three research questions:

- Research question 1: Is the proportion of contacts to helplines made by males lower than that made by females?
- Research question 2: Are positive stories in newsprint media about men with depression and/or anxiety followed by an increase in contacts by males to helplines?
- Research question 3: What are the features of the newsprint stories that lead to an increase in contacts by males to helplines?

## **Approach**

At the outset, we constituted a Consumer Reference Group, consisting of eight men with lived experience of depression and/or anxiety, to guide the study.

We developed a set of criteria to identify positive newsprint stories about men with depression and/or anxiety. The Consumer Reference Group assisted us with this task. We also drew on *Reporting Suicide and Mental Illness*,<sup>10</sup> a resource for media professionals developed under the *Mindframe National Media Initiative*.

We searched the Newsbank database for candidate positive stories that appeared in newsprint media between 1 July 2012 and 30 June 2013, using the above criteria to select a final pool of ten stories. We then examined contacts to helplines by males (and females) that occurred in the one week, two weeks, and three weeks before and after the publication of these stories. Four national

Australian helplines (*Lifeline, MensLine Australia, SANE Australia and beyondblue*) provided us with data on contacts.

## **Key findings**

The proportion of men contacting helplines was lower than that of women, although the proportion of male contacts appears to have increased in recent years.

Of the ten stories analysed, four were associated with increased contact with helplines by men in the two weeks following the story. When the observation period was expanded to three weeks, one further story was also associated with increased contacts to helplines by men. One story resulted in increased contacts only in the first week following the story. One story had a negative impact on contacts to helplines by men and three stories showed no change in contacts.

The four stories that had the most consistently positive impact on contacts to helplines (at two and three weeks post-story) were differentiated from the other stories by being stories about hope and recovery that featured men who were either revered or could be easily identified with.

The increase in contacts was somewhat consistent across the four helplines, even though the four helplines differ in their intended target client (i.e., men only, all Australians, those with mental illness, those with depression or anxiety) and even though two of the stories featured campaigns that were promoting only one of the helplines.

## **Discussion**

The findings are consistent with social cognitive theory that postulates that role modelling of successful behaviours by people who are revered or identified with will lead to behaviour change. In this instance, as men see Ian Thorpe, Garry McDonald and the fictional Dr Ironwood model seeking help and recovery, their self-efficacy and incentive to change increases, leading to their own help-seeking. Conversely, stories that were not hopeful or featured people with whom men could not identify did not lead to a positive change in the volume of helpline contacts.

The finding regarding some consistency in the increases in contacts across the four helplines is positive as it suggests that media stories may have the potential to increase help-seeking in general, not just to a featured help source. The findings indicate that the helplines can play an important role in assisting men to seek help and find service pathways for the treatment of depression and anxiety.

The findings have some implications for media professionals. For instance, the Newsbank search found that many of the articles did not mention helplines, which is one of the recommendations of *Reporting Suicide and Mental Illness*. The findings and the Consumer Reference Group also highlighted the importance of the focus of the story, recommending a focus on hope and recovery over one that is pessimistic.

## **Conclusions**

This study demonstrates the significant positive impact that newsprint media can have on the help-seeking behaviours of men with depression and/or anxiety. The findings reconfirm the need for articles to provide accurate representations of depression and anxiety, while maintaining an

optimistic focus on recovery. The use of publicly revered role models appears to be particularly useful in promoting help-seeking.



# Chapter 1: Context

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The media is the public's primary source of information on mental illness<sup>1-3</sup> and plays an important role in shaping people's perceptions about mental illness.<sup>4,5</sup> The media can have a strong influence on people's behaviour in relation to mental illness and has the potential to promote help-seeking. This study aimed to explore the impact of newsprint stories on men's help-seeking. For the purposes of this study a 'story' is considered to be a collection of one or more individual newsprint articles on the same topic.

## Help-seeking

A recent review of help-seeking literature revealed that there is no clear definition of help-seeking.<sup>11</sup> The authors of the review proposed the following definition of help-seeking in relation to mental health which is adopted in this study: 'in the mental health context, help-seeking is an adaptive coping process that is the attempt to obtain external assistance to deal with mental health concerns'(p.174). This study examined help-seeking to helplines, and specifically explored the link between positive media stories (i.e., stories that are constructive or affirming) about men's depression and/or anxiety in newsprint and help-seeking by men as indicated by contacts with helplines.

## Social cognitive theory

Social cognitive theory (previously known as social learning theory),<sup>6,7</sup> provides one explanation for the link between media representations of mental health and illness and help-seeking. This theory posits that self-efficacy is key for changing behaviours, such as help-seeking, and that many of the expectations we hold about ourselves are derived from vicarious experience. The media

presents us with an abundance of vicarious experiences every day, and a vast amount of information about human behavior and values is gained through the mass media.<sup>7</sup> Through these vicarious experiences, people persuade themselves that if others can change their behaviour, then so can they. Social cognitive theory postulates that our self-efficacy increases the more we see others modeling successful behaviours, such that seeing others gain desired outcomes can function as a positive incentive for behaviour. Learning is further enhanced when others' thoughts regarding problem-solving can be observed. Role models can act not only to legitimise new practices, but also to advocate for new behaviours by directly encouraging others to adopt them.

A key element of social cognitive theory is that the observer identifies with the role model in some way, either revering them or seeing them as being similar to themselves.<sup>7</sup> Thus, celebrities can have a powerful effect on peoples' behaviour. For example, research on the reporting of suicide has shown that a copycat effect is much more likely when the story is about a celebrity than when it is not.<sup>7 12</sup> This impact is also clearly displayed in the frequent use of celebrity endorsement in advertising.

In relation to mental illness portrayed in the media, social cognitive theory would therefore predict that if we are presented with stories of others whom we either revere or identify with successfully seeking help or recovering from mental illness, then we learn from this; self-efficacy increases, and we are more likely to similarly seek help for mental illness and take other steps towards recovery. The media, therefore, has a significant opportunity to capitalise on stories about people with mental illness, especially celebrities, to maximise their potential to promote positive behaviour change for people with mental illness.

## The portrayal of mental illness in the media

The Australian news media can portray mental illness in a way that promotes stigma and/or perpetuates myths about mental illness.<sup>3</sup> This is concerning, as stigma about mental illness has been shown to have a negative impact on help-seeking by those with mental illness<sup>13 14</sup> and may also impact on people with mental illness themselves, distorting their views of their own capabilities and chances of recovery.<sup>15</sup> The link between negative media reporting and behaviour is clearly demonstrated by the established link between reporting of suicides and suicidal behaviours. An analysis of Australian data showed that a substantial number of media stories about suicide were followed by an increase in suicides.<sup>16</sup>

With the aim of encouraging responsible, accurate and sensitive representation of mental illness and suicide in the Australian mass media, the Australian Government's Department of Health has targeted the media via its *Mindframe National Media Initiative*. *Mindframe* has developed a resource for media professionals known as *Reporting Suicide and Mental Illness*.<sup>10</sup> The resource provides information about how to report mental illness in an accurate and balanced way. It advises that 'media professionals can help improve understanding and community attitudes towards mental illness by: providing accurate information about mental illness and specific mental disorders; encouraging people in distress to seek help, for instance by providing helpline numbers; breaking down myths about mental illness and allowing people who have experienced mental illness to tell their own stories'(p21).

There is evidence that the reporting of mental illness has improved over time in Australia.<sup>3</sup> However, little is known about whether constructive or affirming media stories about mental illness, such as those consistent with the *Mindframe* resources, actually have a positive effect on

people's behaviour,<sup>8</sup> consistent with social cognitive theory. A recent review of studies found that mass media stigma reduction campaigns and documentary films can have positive effects on knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.<sup>6</sup> The self-efficacy and views of people with mental disorders in regard to their illness have been shown to have a clear association with public attitudes and behaviour, such that less stigmatising public attitudes are associated with lower rates of self-stigma.<sup>17</sup> Theoretically then, media stories might also have a positive impact and encourage help-seeking behaviour. If this were so, it might provide opportunities for the media to improve awareness of mental health services, effectively creating an innovative pathway to care for individuals with mental health problems.

### **Men, mental illness and help-seeking**

The media's role in encouraging help-seeking behaviour may be particularly important for men with mental health problems. The 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing (NSMHWB) assessed lifetime and 12-month prevalence of mental disorders using a diagnostic screening tool (World Mental Health Survey Initiative version of the World Health Organization's Composite International Diagnostic Interview<sup>18</sup>), and found that men experienced lower rates of mental disorders in the past 12 months than women (18% and 22% respectively). Men experienced lower rates than women of anxiety (11% and 18% respectively) and affective disorders (6% and 7% respectively), but a higher rate of substance use disorders (7% and 3% respectively).<sup>19</sup> However, it has been argued that the lower reported rate of mental disorders in men may be due to the use of diagnostic criteria that are less sensitive to the presentation of disorders in men and due to men minimising their mental health concerns.<sup>20</sup>

Across both genders and at all ages there is a much higher prevalence of mental health problems

than help-seeking in Australia,<sup>11</sup> and while men have slightly lower rates of mental disorders, they also have been shown to have significantly reduced help-seeking for mental health problems compared with women.<sup>21 22</sup> The NSMHWB found that although 41% of women with a mental disorder in the past 12 months had accessed help, only 28% of men had done so.<sup>19</sup> Australian and international studies of callers to helplines have similarly found a lower rate of male callers.<sup>23-25</sup>

In addition to reduced help-seeking, men also often delay seeking help such that their symptoms are more severe when they start treatment.<sup>20</sup> When they notice symptoms, many men self-monitor and self-treat, hoping that symptoms will disappear, before reluctantly seeking professional care.<sup>20</sup>

Research suggests that men's decreased and delayed help-seeking is due to a number of interdependent factors. Firstly, men show a lower level of mental health literacy (i.e., 'knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which aid in recovery, treatment or prevention,'p182)<sup>26</sup> compared with women.<sup>27 28</sup> This lowered mental health literacy is arguably the basis for the greater mental health stigma that is also found in men.<sup>29 30</sup> It is perhaps not surprising then that research has also consistently demonstrated that men have more negative attitudes towards help-seeking for mental health problems.<sup>31</sup> In particular, traditional masculine behaviour and attitudes have been found to relate to reduced and delayed help-seeking for mental health problems.<sup>9 32-34</sup>

Men's reluctance to access health services in general has been cited as a key issue to be overcome in order to improve men's health.<sup>9</sup> Understanding and encouraging men's help-seeking behaviour in general is therefore an important focus for research and health policy.

## **Helpline use as an indicator of help-seeking**

This study used contacts with helplines as an indicator of help-seeking behaviour. Helplines in Australia receive an enormous number of contacts (including phone calls, emails and web contacts). For example, *Lifeline* 13 11 14 receives around 1,800 calls a day.<sup>35</sup> Because of this, there is potentially a vast repository of data with helpline services regarding the help-seeking behaviours of individuals. There are many benefits to individuals accessing help from helplines: they are free or low cost, can be accessed immediately and at any time, and are anonymous and confidential and therefore can be felt to be less stigmatising than other forms of help. For these reasons, helplines may be an attractive first port of call for someone with a mental health issue. Helplines have also been demonstrated to provide an effective crisis intervention for individuals with mental health issues, resulting in improved mental state for callers<sup>36-38</sup> and providing effective referral and linkage to other services.<sup>39</sup>

## **The study**

This study examined the role the media can play in encouraging help-seeking behaviour in men. Specifically, it explored whether there is a relationship between constructive and affirming (positive) newsprint stories about depression and/or anxiety in men and use of helpline services by men. In relation to the social cognitive theory discussed earlier, the study identified stories in the newsprint media about well-known and/or admired people modeling help-seeking and recovery from mental illness, specifically depression and/or anxiety. Men's contacts to helplines in the two weeks before and after selected stories were analysed in order to see whether the stories were associated with any increases. Contacts in the one week before and after, and the three weeks before and after, a story were also observed. The help-seeking behaviours of these males can be seen as the 'behaviour change' posited by the social cognitive theory.

Newsprint media was chosen for this project, rather than other media such as television, radio, or the various forms of online media, for two reasons. Most people are exposed to a range of media over the course of a week.<sup>40</sup> However, newsprint often sets the agenda for other media. A previous review of research has shown that newsprint media has a major influence on television news, and that there is also substantial overlap between stories in newspaper and stories in television, radio and online.<sup>41</sup> Thus, it is likely that newsprint media stories provide a good representation of stories occurring in all media. Secondly, newsprint can be systematically explored and analysed. There are a number of databases that allow users to easily search newsprint content for specific words, terms and dates.

### **Implications of the project**

Previous research clearly demonstrates that stigma around help-seeking for men with mental illness exists and this can prevent or delay men from accessing treatment. This research found that men contact helplines at a lower rate than women. It is important therefore that mental health services, and other related agencies, work harder to promote help-seeking amongst men. The current project confirms previous findings that have found a strong connection between the media and people's behaviour regarding mental illness. The media can have both a negative and positive impact on people's behaviour, and therefore can play a key role in promoting help-seeking.

Media campaigns aimed at men are effective in promoting help-seeking, as are celebrity disclosures in the media which are focused on hope and recovery. Helplines should always be mentioned in media stories that feature mental illness, as helplines have a clear role to play in assisting men to seek help and find service pathways for the treatment of depression and anxiety.

Helplines can work together to de-stigmatise mental illness and promote help-seeking amongst men as the findings indicate that may all benefit with increased contacts by men to their services.



## Chapter 2: Approach

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### Research questions

The study set out to answer the following research questions:

- Research question 1: Is the proportion of contacts to helplines made by males lower than that made by females?
- Research question 2: Are positive stories in newsprint media about men with depression and/or anxiety followed by an increase in contacts by males to helplines?
- Research question 3: What are the features of the newsprint stories that lead to an increase in contacts by males to helplines?

### Consumer Reference Group

At the outset of the study, we put together a Consumer Reference Group that could provide input into questions of study design and to assist with interpreting the study findings. Eight men with self-identified depression and/or anxiety were recruited through *beyondblue's* blueVoices.

BlueVoices is *beyondblue's* online community and reference group of approximately 1,800 people who have personal experience of depression and/or anxiety, or support someone who does.

*beyondblue* sent an email to all blueVoices members on our behalf, inviting them to contact us if they were interested in being part of a Consumer Reference Group for the project.

The Consumer Reference Group met for 90 minutes on 13 August 2013 to provide input into the selection of positively-framed media stories. The discussion was semi-structured and focused on the group's reflections on media stories that may have come to their attention as being likely to lead to help-seeking, as well as two examples of recent media stories chosen by the researchers:

the national story of AFL footballer Harry O'Brien and *beyondblue's* Man Therapy campaign with a local story on Tony McManus. The discussion helped establish criteria for choosing newsprint stories. The questions used as the starting point for the discussion are listed in Appendix A.

A second 90-minute Consumer Reference Group meeting was held on 21 January 2014 to provide input into the interpretation of the study's findings. The group was asked to consider why certain newsprint stories had impacted on male contacts with helplines. The questions that guided the discussion at the second Consumer Reference Group meeting are shown in Appendix B.

### **Newsprint stories**

Newsbank is a web-based newsprint database that allows the researcher to search newsprint media globally. Newsprint can be searched by content, date, location and media source; we conducted our search using the search term 'mental health' and restricted it to Australian newsprint. Newsbank also provides an email service through which newsprint articles relevant to defined search terms are emailed to researchers at regular intervals, and we received daily alerts that included articles relevant to our search term. We also monitored newsprints (and television news) for relevant stories and asked representatives from the helplines whether they were aware of any stories that might be related to volume of contacts. We concentrated our search over a 12-month period: 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013.

Once a shortlist of articles was developed, we conducted a further refined search, through Newsbank, of all newsprint articles featuring the words 'depression' or 'anxiety' that appeared in the media in the fortnight before and after each story. The time frame of two weeks was used, as it has been suggested by previous research.<sup>16</sup> This search enabled us to ascertain the exact dates

of the newsprint coverage of the story, what other coverage of depression and anxiety was occurring at the same time (which may confound our analyses) and whether there were other stories that might be more suitable for our analyses. We aimed to find ten stories that were spaced apart in time over the 12 months so that we could analyse them separately.

We sought positive news stories that we thought would be likely to promote help-seeking, and gauged this in two different ways. Firstly, we asked the Consumer Reference Group to consider characteristics that they would attribute to a positive story, and to indicate whether they could remember any particular positive stories that had been published in the period of interest.

Secondly, we drew on the recommendations in the *Mindframe* resource, *Reporting Suicide and Mental Illness*.<sup>10</sup>

The Consumer Reference Group indicated that articles that would promote help-seeking would be ones that remove the stigma around mental illness and demonstrate pathways to recovery.

Specifically, they recommended that articles might:

- feature someone disclosing depression or anxiety. This may or may not be a celebrity; other male role models (e.g., soldiers) are also important to men.
- include an accurate description of symptoms.
- provide information about pathways to help (e.g., describe how the person in the story sought help, or mention of sources of help).
- feature someone (e.g., a celebrity or other role model) who may or may not have a mental illness themselves advocating on behalf of people with mental illness.

The Consumer Reference Group also indicated that the story:

- need not necessarily be about recovery or convey hopeful messages. They felt that some men might connect with a story about someone 'at their worst', and that this might promote help-seeking.
- should not feature government announcements, research findings or be about women (unless it is relevant to male interests (e.g., music)).

*Reporting Suicide and Mental Illness*<sup>10</sup> recommends that the reporting of mental illness should:

- provide accurate information about specific mental disorders and use medical terms correctly.
- encourage people to seek help, for instance by providing helpline numbers.
- break down myths about mental illness and allow people to tell their own stories.
- use appropriate language and avoid stereotypes.

In addition to the criteria suggested by the Consumer Reference Group and the recommendations from *Reporting Suicide and Mental Illness*,<sup>10</sup> it is likely that there are other stories which may contribute to contacts with helplines. These were outside the scope of the study, but we were mindful of them because, as newsprint media events, they could influence our findings. We established the following criteria for identifying these stories:

- stories about mental health that either produce a large quantity of newsprint coverage or are 'sensational'.
- mental health campaigns that are not identified by the criteria mentioned above.
- other significant media promoting helplines.

Once we identified articles through our searching and selected those that met criteria for inclusion, we recorded the following features of each:

- article title
- date of the article
- the newsprint, and geographic reach of the newsprint
- a brief summary of the article
- whether helplines were mentioned in the article.

### **Helpline call data**

Data on helpline contacts were obtained from four national Australian helplines: *Lifeline*, *MensLine Australia*, *SANE Australia*, and *beyondblue*. Each of these organisations are described below.

- *Lifeline* operates a national telephone helpline - 13 11 44 - that provides 24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention. Lifeline also provides other crisis support services through phone, face-to-face, and online mediums.<sup>35</sup>
- *MensLine Australia* is a national telephone and online support, information and referral service for men with family and relationship concerns. The service is available 24 hours a day.<sup>42</sup>
- The *SANE* Helpline provides information, advice and referral for mental illness and mental health concerns, to anyone seeking assistance. The Helpline operates 9am-5pm weekdays and online services are also provided.<sup>43</sup>

- *beyondblue* provides educational resources and information papers, funds research, undertake media campaigns to raise public awareness and advocates to government regarding mental health policy. They also provide a 24-hour-a-day helpline and online support for those concerned about their, or someone else's, mental health.<sup>44</sup>

All of the helplines provided us with raw contact data (i.e., data related to calls, web and email contacts) in Excel. We aimed to obtain five years of data in order that any annual fluctuations in contact volume, not related to newsprint stories, could be identified. Data was collated across the helplines. Four of the helplines provided data for the five-year period 1 September 2008 to 31 August 2013. One of the helplines provided data from 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2013.

The helplines received varying numbers of contacts each year, with one of the helplines receiving substantially more contacts than the other three. Although the data varied by helpline, there were some commonalities between the helplines in terms of the method of data collection and the data obtained. For each of the helplines, the telephone or online system automatically populates a central database with some information about when the call occurred and how long it lasted. Telephone staff (paid and volunteer) record additional data on the caller's characteristics, and the nature of the contact into the database. Three of the four helplines recorded phone calls, web and email contacts into the same database, and these are referred to collectively as 'contacts' throughout the report. One of the helplines operated their online services as a separate service, with data collected for that service in a separate database. Thus, online contact data for this one helpline was not included in this research. For the purposes of the research, we extracted the date, gender, and location (state) of the contact, which were recorded in a similar way across the four helplines.

## **Data management and analysis**

Data from the four helplines were collated into one file that listed the details of each helpline contact. For the purposes of analysis, an additional dataset was created to identify the volume of contacts on each date in the year of interest. Based on each story's date (i.e., the date that the first article appeared related to the story), a series of variables were then created which identified the 'before' and 'after' time periods for each media story. Simple frequencies were used to determine seasonal variation in contact volume. Chi-Square analysis was used to determine the significance in the change in the proportion of male contacts over the five years. Poisson regression analysis was used to determine the change in contact volume following each story. Nine of the stories were national, and for these national data were analysed. One of the stories occurred in only one state of Australia (New South Wales), so only contact data identified as originating from this state were analysed for this story. Data analysis was performed using Stata version 12 and SPSS version 21.

## Chapter 3: Results

### Five year helpline data: Looking for seasonal fluctuations

Figure 1 shows the total number of contacts (phone calls, web and email contacts) to the helplines over the past five years (1 September 2008 to 31 August 2014). As mentioned, data from one helpline was only available from September 2009. In total there were 2,862,069 contacts to the four helplines between 1 September 2008 and 31 August 2013, and these contacts increased every year. Although the volume of contacts per month appeared to be quite steady across the years, some minor patterns were noted. The volume appeared to increase towards the end of the year in October, November and December, then decrease in January, and plateau in the first half of the year. As our primary analysis focuses on a fortnight period either side of each story we were confident that the analysis would not be dominated by any major seasonal variations.

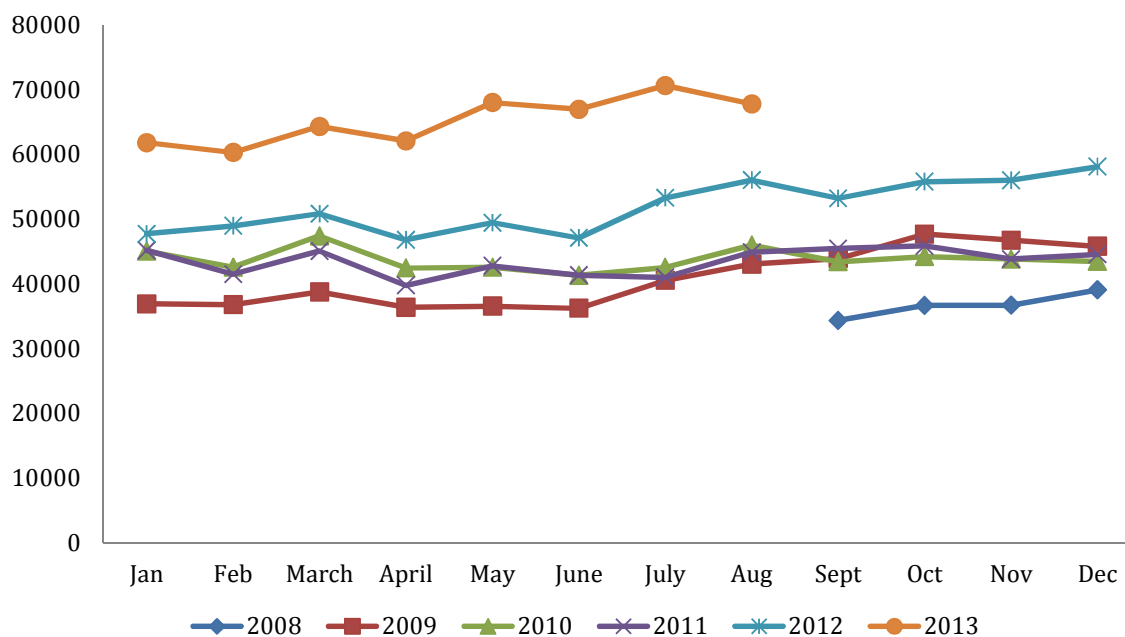


Figure 1: Contacts to helplines by year and month



**Research question 1: Is the proportion of contacts to helplines made by males lower than that made by females?**

Table 1 shows the total number of contacts by gender to the helplines from 1 September 2008 to 31 August 2013. Note again that data from one helpline was only available from September 2009.

A Pearson Chi-Square test was undertaken to determine whether the change over time in percentage of contacts by each were statistically significant. The test revealed that the percentage of contacts to the helplines differed by gender over time, ( $\chi^2(10, N = 2,827,216) = 16,143.818, p < .001$ ). Although there is a lot of ‘unknown’ gender data, this analysis indicates that while the proportion of men making contact with the helplines is lower than women, it is likely that men have comprised an increasingly greater proportion of contacts to helplines over recent years.

**Table 1. Contacts to helplines by year and gender.**

Year	Male		Female		Unknown		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
1 Sept - 31 Dec 2008*	52,415	28.9	85,746	47.2	43,468	23.9	181,629
1 Jan - 31 Dec 2009	140,331	28.7	228,430	46.7	120,510	24.6	489,271
1 Jan - 31 Dec 2010	151,993	29.0	250,795	47.8	122,039	23.3	524,827
1 Jan - 31 Dec 2011	152,850	29.3	240,100	46.1	128,213	24.6	521,163
1 Jan - 31 Dec 2012	213,298	34.2	298,064	47.8	111,920	18.0	623,282
1 Jan - 31 Aug 2013*	180,356	34.6	226,275	43.4	115,266	22.1	521,897

\* incomplete years

## **Research question 2: Are positive stories in newsprint media about men with depression or anxiety followed by an increase in contacts by males to helplines?**

A total of 13,324 newsprint articles featuring the words 'depression' or 'anxiety' were reviewed using the criteria described in Chapter 2. Ultimately, 105 articles were selected; these represented ten stories.

Table 2 shows the final list of stories selected for analysis. The table describes the story, the number of articles related to it, and the number of articles mentioning helplines (and the specific helplines mentioned). Although our search initially focused on the initial 12-month period, 1 July 2012 - 30 June 2013, our final ten stories includes one that is just outside this time period. The Harry O'Brien story first appeared in newsprint on 9 July 2013. We decided to include this story as it received quite a lot of media coverage, and we felt it would make an interesting contribution to the research. Also, by selecting this story, in combination with the others, we obtained a spread of stories over time with little overlap in time between each them. Thus, the final ten stories occurred between 8 July 2012 and 9 July 2013. All but one of the stories featured male advocates, and all but two featured male celebrities. The *beyondblue* Man Therapy campaign featured a fictional male character. The Ruby Rose story features a female DJ but was included as the Consumer Reference Group suggested that this story might have an impact on men, given the subject's high profile as a DJ and popularity among men. Nine of the stories were national stories. The David Smiedt story occurred in only one state of Australia: New South Wales.

**Table 2. Summary of newsprint stories selected for analysis.**

Story	Date of first article	No. articles	Summary of story	No. articles mentioning helplines	Helplines or websites mentioned
Ian Thorpe television interview	8 July 2012	8	Ian Thorpe is an Olympic swimmer. The eight articles described Thorpe's TV appearance in which he discusses his depression.	0	None.
David Smiedt	9 Sept 2012	1	David Smiedt is a comedian, blogger and newspaper contributor. One long article appeared in a NSW paper written by Smiedt within which he describes his depression.	1	R U OK day website
John Cantwell	22 Sept 2012	6	John Cantwell is a retired army Major. Cantwell's PTSD and depression is described in six articles in the context of his book release. The story became controversial as he was quite vocal about the negative impact active duty can have on soldiers.	0	None.
Edward Fernon	1 Oct 2012	5	Edward Fernon is an Olympic pentathlete. Five articles describe Fernon's horse ride that retraces the steps of the historically significant horse Archer, from Braidwood to the Melbourne Cup, to raise awareness of depression.	0	None.
Ian Thorpe book release	13 Oct 2012	3	Three articles describe Thorpe's book release with a focus on his 'inner demons' of depression and alcohol use.	2	Suicide helpline, <i>Lifeline</i> , <i>MensLine Australia</i> , <i>beyondblue</i> helpline.
Matthew Mitcham	17 Nov 2012	10	Matthew Mitcham is an Olympic diver. The ten articles describe Mitcham's drug use and depression, but mostly focus on his drug use. The story coincides with 'Movember' (a male mental health campaign) for which there were 27 articles.	0	None.
Ruby Rose	1 April 2013	16	Ruby Rose is a female DJ. The 16 articles report on Rose's cancellation of her DJ tour due to her depression.	3	<i>Lifeline</i> .
<i>beyondblue</i> 'Get to Know Anxiety' Campaign	6 May 2013	13	The 13 articles describe <i>beyondblue</i> 's Anxiety campaign. The campaign features celebrity advocates. Garry McDonald (actor) discusses his anxiety and Ben Mendelsohn (actor) features in campaign material. The campaign initially focussed on men and then broadened its focus to include women.	5	<i>beyondblue</i> helpline and website.
<i>beyondblue</i> 'Man Therapy Campaign'	5 June 2013	15	The 15 articles describe <i>beyondblue</i> 's Man Therapy campaign, which targeted men and featured the comical fictional character Dr Ironwood. The campaign encourages men to get help for mental health problems.	13	Man Therapy website ( <i>beyondblue</i> ), <i>beyondblue</i> helpline, <i>Lifeline</i> , headspace, kids helpline, suicide call back line.
Harry O'Brien	9 July 2013	28	Harry O'Brien is a well known footballer. The 28 articles describe his revelations of many personal troubles including depression. The story started supportively and then turned more into a discussion about the impact of his behaviour on his football team.	8	<i>Lifeline</i> , <i>MensLine Australia</i> , <i>beyondblue</i> helpline.

Poisson regression analysis was used to determine the change in contact volume following each story. From the Poisson models, the rate ratios and their confidence intervals and p values were calculated. Nine of the stories were national, and for these national data were analysed. One of the stories (David Smiedt) occurred in only one state of Australia (New South Wales), so only contact data identified as originating from this state were analysed for this story. Table 3 presents male helpline activity in the fortnight before and after each story in terms of the total number of contacts in the time period, the daily mean and median contacts, and the rate ratio, along with the confidence interval and associated p value from the Poisson regression analyses. As illustrated in Table 3, there were significant changes in male contact volume after four of the stories.

Specifically, contact volume increased after the following stories: reports of Ian Thorpe's television interview and Ian Thorpe's book release, *beyondblue's* Get to Know Anxiety campaign launch and *beyondblue's* Man Therapy campaign launch. The largest increase in contacts was 9%, following the *beyondblue* Get to Know Anxiety campaign, where daily contacts increased by a mean of 57.7 helpline contacts per day in the fortnight following the campaign launch in comparison to the fortnight before the campaign. The mean number of daily contacts to helplines increased by more than 30 contacts in the fortnight following the reporting of Ian Thorpe's television interview and the *beyondblue* Man Therapy campaign while the reporting of Ian Thorpe's book release resulted in an increase of 28.93 contacts per day in the fortnight after the media story in comparison to before.

Conversely, the volume of contacts significantly decreased by 10% in the fortnight after the Major John Cantwell story. There was no significant difference in the volume of contacts in the fortnight following the stories of Edward Fernon, Matthew Mitcham, Harry O'Brien, Ruby Rose and David Smiedt.

**Table 3. Helpline activity in the fortnight before and after each media event: Total number, daily mean, daily median and rate ratio**

Media Story		Total Contacts	Daily Mean Contacts (SD)	Daily Median Contacts (min-max)	Rate Ratio (95%CI)	p value
Ian Thorpe television interview	Before	7,145	510.4 (51.0)	506.0 (430-604)	Ref.	
	After	7,630	545.0 (76.7)	580.5 (427-641)	1.07 (1.03-1.10)	< 0.001
David Smiedt	Before	2,098	149.9 (25.5)	146.5 (98-184)	Ref.	
	After	2,175	155.4 (30.5)	160.5 (108-201)	1.04 (0.98-1.10)	0.239
John Cantwell	Before	8,075	576.8 (97.6)	624.0 (447-694)	Ref.	
	After	7,293	520.9(72.3)	546.5 (400-614)	0.90 (0.88-0.93)	<0.001
Edward Fernon	Before	7,667	547.6 (99.9)	567.0 (400-694)	Ref.	
	After	7,574	541.0 (62.5)	547.0 (450-641)	0.99 (0.96-1.02)	0.451
Ian Thorpe book release	Before	7,477	534.1 (73. 9)	547.0 (400-641)	Ref.	
	After	7,882	563.0 (78.2)	574.0 (450- 660)	1.05 (1.02-1.09)	0.001
Matthew Mitcham	Before	8,149	582.1 (74.4)	607.0 (457-665)	Ref.	
	After	8,313	593.8 (77.5)	611.5 (454-738)	1.02 (0.99-1.05)	0.201
Ruby Rose	Before	8,817	629.8 (73.2)	626.0 (493-746)	Ref.	
	After	8,797	628.4 (59.6)	640.5 (519-726)	1.00 (.97- 1.02)	0.880
<i>beyondblue</i> Get to Know Anxiety campaign	Before	8,625	616.1 (68.0)	630.0 (509-706)	Ref.	
	After	9,433	673.8 (86.8)	672.5 (524-783)	1.09 (1.06-1.13)	<0.001
<i>beyondblue</i> Man Therapy campaign	Before	9,444	674.6 (70.7)	693.5 (540-765)	Ref.	
	After	9,911	707.9 (74.4)	700.5 (597-817)	1.05 (1.02-1.08)	0.001
Harry O'Brien	Before	10,002	714.4 (56.0)	721.0 (602-805)	Ref.	
	After	10,232	730.9 (80.9)	764.0 (606- 867)	1.02 (1.00-1.05)	0.106

We conducted a sensitivity analysis to assess whether there were any differences in the mean volume of contacts if we focused on a shorter or longer time period. Specifically, we considered whether there was a difference in male helpline contacts within one and three weeks of each story (see Appendix C). Although the results for each time period were very similar overall, some differences were noted. The analysis suggests that a one week time period may have captured stories with a very short 'media life' such as Ruby Rose's announcement of depression that were not evident when looking at a fortnight before and after the event. The pattern of results for a three week period was very similar to that for a two week period, with one exception: a significant increase in helpline contact volume was noted in the three weeks after the Matthew Mitcham story.

We also examined whether the results presented thus far were part of an overall increase in the total volume of contacts following a media story or whether they represented an increase in helpline contacts only by males. To do this, we compared male and female helpline contacts. Table 4 presents female helpline activity in the fortnight before and after each media story in terms of the total number of contacts in the time period, the daily mean and median contacts and the incidence ratio along with the confidence interval and associated p value. As with the males, there was an increase in helpline contacts in the fortnight following the reporting of Ian Thorpe's television interview and book release, and the *beyondblue* Man Therapy, and a decrease following the John Cantwell story. By contrast, however, the volume of female contacts also significantly increased in the two weeks following the stories about Matthew Mitcham and Ruby Rose, and there was no change in female contacts after the *beyondblue* Get to Know Anxiety campaign.

**Table 4. Female helpline activity in the fortnight before and after each media event: Total number, daily mean, daily median and rate ratio**

Media Story		Total Contacts	Daily Mean Contacts (SD)	Daily Median Contacts (min-max)	Rate Ratio (95%CI)	p value
Ian Thorpe television interview	Before	10,418	744.1 (87.4)	762.5 (599-853)	Ref.	
	After	11,407	814.8 (120.4)	866.5 (593-962)	1.09 (1.07-1.12)	<0.001
David Smiedt	Before	3,732	266.6 (32.2)	278.0 (200-314)	Ref.	
	After	3,771	269.4 (40.1)	277.5 (188-323)	1.01 (0.97-1.06)	0.653
John Cantwell	Before	12,072	862.3 (143.8)	921.0 (640-1052)	Ref.	
	After	11,053	789.5 (129.6)	800.5 (561-968)	0.92 (0.89-0.94)	<0.001
Edward Fernon	Before	11,421	815.8 (142.6)	842.5 (561-1018)	Ref.	
	After	11,260	804.3 (114.6)	806.5 (625-968)	0.99 (0.96-1.01)	0.285
Ian Thorpe book release	Before	11,149	796.4 (128.1)	806.5 (561-968)	Ref.	
	After	11,556	825.4 (136.3)	857.0 (625-1004)	1.04 (1.01-1.06)	0.007
Matthew Mitcham	Before	11,762	840.1 (97.7)	874.5 (662-977)	Ref.	
	After	12,350	882.1 (128.3)	919.5 (679-1077)	1.05 (1.02-1.08)	<0.001
Ruby Rose	Before	12,130	866.4 (113.9)	848.5 (684-1058)	Ref.	
	After	12,879	919.9 (99.2)	968.5 (767-1075)	1.06 (1.04-1.09)	<0.001
<i>beyondblue</i> Get to Know Anxiety campaign	Before	12,410	886.4 (102.6)	878.0 (672-1037)	Ref.	
	After	12,520	894.3 (143.9)	913.0 (679-1124)	1.01 (0.98-1.03)	0.486
<i>beyondblue</i> Man Therapy campaign	Before	12,895	921.1 (86.0)	952.0 (788-1043)	Ref.	
	After	13,233	945.2 (102.4)	975.5 (785-1124)	1.03 (1.00-1.05)	0.037
Harry O'Brien	Before	12,848	917.7 (100.7)	935.0 (772-1073)	Ref.	
	After	13,158	939.9 (99.4)	959.5 (768-1067)	1.02 (1.00-1.05)	0.055

### **Research Question 3: What are the features of the newsprint stories that lead to an increase in contacts by males to helplines?**

Of the ten stories analysed, four were associated with increased contact with helplines by men in the two weeks following the story. When the observation period was expanded to three weeks, one further story was also associated with increased contacts to helplines by men. One story resulted in increased contacts only in the first week following the story. One story had a negative impact on contacts to helplines by men and three stories resulted in no change in contacts. We conducted a qualitative examination of these stories in order to determine whether there were characteristics that distinguished the three groups of stories. The Consumer Reference Group provided input into this analysis.

#### ***Increased contact***

The two Ian Thorpe stories were quite similar in that they both discussed Ian Thorpe's depression, in the context of a television appearance (featured in eight articles, no reference to helplines), and the other in the context of a book release (three articles, reference to helplines). The Consumer Reference Group commented that these stories were important for two main reasons. Firstly, the group suggested that Ian Thorpe was a role model for men; he was someone men could both look up to and identify with as being similar to them. Secondly, they noted that his story was one of hope and recovery and, as such, was quite inspirational. The group felt these two factors combined may have contributed to the increase in male contacts to helplines.

The Consumer Reference Group were not surprised that the stories about the two *beyondblue* campaigns, Get to Know Anxiety (13 articles, reference to helplines) and Man Therapy (15 articles, reference to helplines) were associated with increased contacts to helplines since encouraging



help-seeking was an explicit aim of both campaigns. The group felt that men with depression and/or anxiety would very easily identify with the characters and celebrities in the campaign and that the campaigns were very successful in removing any stigma associated with mental illness, and promoting help-seeking. The group also noted that the campaign coverage was widespread, appearing not only in newsprint but also in advertising in public spaces.

The Ruby Rose story (female DJ cancelling tour due to depression) related to an increase in contacts in the one-week period, but not the two- or three-week period following the first article related to the story. The Newsbank search revealed that the story featured 16 very brief articles that appeared in a one week period. Helplines were only mentioned in three of the articles. Many of the articles were only a few lines long. Contacts to helplines perhaps mirrored the features of the story: a quick burst of contacts that quickly faded away. The Consumer Reference Group agreed that this may be the case.

The Matthew Mitcham story (Olympian diver revealing depression and drug use) related to an increase in contacts in the three-week period, but not the one- or two-week period following the first article. The Newsbank search showed some features of the newsprint coverage that may explain these findings. The story occurred during Movember (a month-long campaign occurring in November each year when men grow moustaches to raise money for the Movember Foundation), and thus we may inadvertently be observing an increase in contacts as the Movember month progressed (i.e., an increase in contacts at the end of the month in comparison to the end of October and beginning of November). Alternatively, it may reflect the length of coverage of this story. The story comprised of two episodes of newsprint coverage with five articles appearing in the middle of November and then three further articles appearing towards the end of November.

There were no references to helplines. The Consumer Reference Group suggested that a story can have a cumulative effect on an individual, with an early article sparking awareness and interest, and then a later article acting to trigger help-seeking.

The Ian Thorpe story about his book release did not result in a significant increase in callers in the one-week time period, but did so in the two- and three-week time period following the first article related to the story. This second Thorpe story had fewer articles than the first (three vs. eight) and is arguably less 'sensational'. Perhaps this explains the slower build up to an increase in male contacts following this story.

Overall, the Consumer Reference Group commented that the most important factors in the stories that resulted in an increase in contacts were that men could identify with the men in the stories and/or that they were stories of hope and recovery.

### ***No change in contact***

There were five stories associated with no change in male contacts to helplines in the fortnight after the story. Three of these were also associated with no change in contact at both one week and three weeks after the story. Consistent with their previous suggestions, the Consumer Reference Group suggested that the reason these three stories did not result in any increase in male contacts to helplines was because not enough men could relate to the people featured in the stories. The stories about David Smiedt (comedian and blogger discussing his depression in one article which referenced helplines) and Edward Fernon (Olympian undertaking horse ride to raise awareness of depression featuring in five articles, no reference to helplines) were about individuals who were unknown to the Consumer Reference Group, and members thought that if

they were also unfamiliar to other males then they would be unlikely to influence them to seek help. The Consumer Reference Group spent some time discussing the Harry O'Brien story (footballer who revealed personal issues including depression, featuring in 28 articles, with eight references to helplines). This story received extensive newsprint coverage, and helplines were sometimes mentioned; however no increase in contacts was noted. The group suggested that the story was handled very poorly by the media, with O'Brien's erratic behaviour being the focus of many of the articles. They also noted that the three stories did not focus on recovery.

### ***Decreased contact***

The John Cantwell story (retired army major with post-traumatic stress disorder and depression, featuring in six articles, no reference to helplines) coincided with the release of his book and described his post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. It became controversial because Cantwell was quite vocal about the negative impact of active duty on soldiers. The Consumer Reference Group suggested that the John Cantwell story may not have had a positive impact on male contacts to helplines for two reasons. Firstly, they felt that the story was quite negative and did not focus on the hopeful aspects of Cantwell's story. Secondly, they suggested that perhaps the public were tired of stories about war, and perhaps they 'switched off' from the story.

## Chapter 4: Discussion and conclusions

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This study explored whether there is a relationship between constructive and affirming (positive) newsprint stories about depression and/or anxiety in men and men's help-seeking behaviour as indicated by their use of helpline services. Specifically, the study posed three research questions:

- Research question 1: Is the proportion of contacts to helplines made by males lower than that made by females?
- Research question 2: Are positive stories in newsprint media about men with depression and/or anxiety followed by an increase in contacts by males to helplines?
- Research question 3: What are the features of the newsprint stories that lead to an increase in contacts by males to helplines?

### ***Key findings***

The proportion of men contacting helplines was lower than that of women, although the proportion of male contacts appears to have increased in more recent years.

Of the ten stories analysed, four were related to an increase in the number of contacts made to helplines by men in the two weeks following the story. One story resulted in increased contacts only in the first week following the story. Another story resulted in increased contacts to helplines in the three weeks following the story. One story resulted in decreased contacts to helplines by men and three stories showed no change in contacts.

The four stories that had the most consistently resulted in increased contacts to helplines by men (at two and three weeks post story) were differentiated from the other stories by being stories

about hope and recovery that featured men that were either revered or could be easily identify with.

### ***Additional resources***

Various resources regarding reporting, portraying, and communicating suicide and mental illness have been developed by the *Mindframe National Media Initiative*. *Mindframe* is funded by the Australian Government's Department of Health and aims 'to encourage responsible, accurate and sensitive representation of mental illness and suicide in the Australian mass media'.<sup>45</sup> They have produced a number of resources for the media, universities, stage and screen, police and for courts. Their publication, *Reporting Suicide and Mental Illness*,<sup>10</sup> was used in this project. Their website is [www.mindframe-media.info](http://www.mindframe-media.info).

### ***Discussion***

The findings are consistent with social cognitive theory, which postulates that role modeling of successful behaviours by people who are revered or identified with will lead to behaviour change in those observing them. In this instance, as men see Ian Thorpe, Garry McDonald and the fictional Dr Ironwood model and advocate for recovery and help-seeking, their self-efficacy and incentive to change increase, leading to their own help-seeking. Conversely, stories that were not hopeful or that featured people with whom men could not identify did not lead to a positive change in contacts to helplines.

Although the analysis is not described in this report, consideration was given to patterns of contacts with the individual helplines. There were some similarities. This is an interesting finding given that the four helplines differ somewhat in their intended target client (i.e., men only, all Australians, those with mental illness, those with depression or anxiety), and two of the stories

featured campaigns that were promoting only one of the helplines. This finding suggests that media stories may have the potential to increase help-seeking in general, not just to a featured help source. This observation is further supported by the finding that two of the stories that resulted in an increase in contacts to helplines did not mention helplines at all. It may be that the helplines have a significant profile in Australia with good awareness by the public, such that they are readily seen as a support for those with mental health concerns. It would be interesting to know whether there were commensurate increases in men seeking help from other sources such as GPs, psychologists, and community-based mental health services. These findings also suggest that it may be useful for helplines to pool some resources and undertake some joint campaigns to encourage help-seeking, as each may be likely to benefit. It would also be useful for the helplines to be aware of each other's campaigning so that they can respond appropriately to any increased demand for services. The findings indicate that the helplines have an important role to play in assisting men to seek help and find service pathways for the treatment of depression and anxiety.

Although men and women differed somewhat in their responses to the stories, there were many similarities. Five of the six stories that resulted in increased contacts to helplines by men also resulted in increased contacts by women, although the timeframe of these responses differed (i.e., one, two or three weeks post-story). The story to which men and women responded differently was the *beyondblue* Get to Know Anxiety campaign, with no change in contacts by women to helplines. This is perhaps not surprising given that the campaign was focussed on men in its initial stages. While women were not the focus of the study, the findings suggest that women are likely to also increase their help-seeking in response to positive stories about men with depression and/or anxiety in newsprint. However, it is also possible that women were not making contact for themselves, but on behalf of a male.

The findings have some implications for media professionals. For instance, the Newsbank search found that many of the articles did not mention helplines, as suggested by the *Mindframe* resource, *Reporting Suicide and Mental Illness*.<sup>10</sup> While this study did not find a direct association between the mention of helplines and help-seeking, it is likely that the frequent mention of helplines acts to maintain the high profile of the helplines.

The Consumer Reference Group also highlighted the importance of the focus of the story. They discussed the impacts of a story that has a pessimistic view of mental illness compared with one that is focused on hope and recovery. For example, one of the articles in the John Cantwell story started with an opening line about the individual being 'locked up in a psychiatric hospital'. The group conceded that while this line may 'hook' in the reader, it can also be very off-putting for anyone with a mental illness. While the group mentioned the importance of describing the symptoms of mental illness in real terms so that people could recognise and identify with them, they also emphasised the need for this to be balanced with a focus on hope and descriptions of pathways to recovery. In the first Consumer Reference Group meeting, it was hypothesised that a story that initiates help-seeking might not necessarily be about recovery or convey hopeful messages; that is some men might connect with a story about someone 'at their worst', and that this might promote help-seeking. However, in light of the findings of the study, the Consumer Reference Group concluded that a focus on hope and recovery is important.

The Consumer Reference Group was quite damning of the way the media dealt with the Harry O'Brien story. This was the story of an AFL player who quite suddenly disclosed his personal troubles, including depression, to the media. The group commented on the way that the media

pursued O'Brien and were not respectful in providing him with space and privacy to deal with his personal troubles. The *Mindframe* resources provide quite comprehensive information about interviewing a person with a mental illness, and clearly these resources were not observed in this instance. The Consumer Reference Group discussed how other health concerns are treated with more respect by the media. They cited a recent example wherein a journalist prematurely ended an interview with a football player who was clearly suffering concussion and escorted him off the football ground, in contrast to the Harry O'Brien story in which journalists pursued him interstate.

The Consumer Reference Group discussed how a media story is created and evolves in the media and the different individuals and forces that control this process. These individuals include not only journalists, but also personal and commercial media advisors, communication professionals, public relations professionals and marketing professionals. For example, the Consumer Reference Group discussed how the O'Brien story could have been much better managed and presented in the media had the story been controlled by the football club or personal representatives of O'Brien. This could have been done through the use of media releases or press conferences in which the questions asked and information supplied could be better controlled. The four stories that had the most consistently positive impact on contacts to helplines were the four stories that were arguably the most carefully planned and executed. Two of the stories were promotional campaigns, carefully managed by *beyondblue*; the other two stories concerned Ian Thorpe and were planned in response to key events (i.e., television appearance and book release). Towards the end of the project, a new media story occurred about Ian Thorpe, this time it was in response to a mental health crisis he was experiencing. The story was spontaneous and unplanned and did not have a hopeful focus. It would be interesting to know if this story had an impact on male contacts to helplines.



### ***Limitations***

The findings of the study are limited by their focus on newsprint articles only. The study did not explore other media such as television, radio and social media. Thus, it is not possible to gauge the true scope of the stories. However, it is likely that the size and reach of the newspaper story was reflective of its size and reach in other media. Also, as our Newsbank search only included articles with the words 'depression' or 'anxiety' appearing in the title or text of the article, it is possible that there were other articles related to the story that appeared in newsprint that did not contain these search words. Another potential limitation was that one of the helplines received substantially more contacts than the other three helplines, and thus supplied much more contact data. As noted above, we conducted a set of helpline-specific analyses by helplines. We found that the findings related to the helplines with the largest number of contacts did not dominate the overall findings.

### ***Further Research***

Further research could seek to inform knowledge about the nature of men's help-seeking in response to media events. The current project explored total male contacts to helplines following newsprint stories. It would be interesting to know more about the characteristics of these males and how these characteristics related to contacts to helplines. For instance, other variables available from helplines for analysis included age and reason for call. Further research could determine whether males of certain ages are more or less likely to be prompted to seek help following media campaigns and stories, and for what sort of reasons they make contact. It might also be useful to know whether males making contact were seeking help for the first time, or as part of ongoing treatment for mental health concerns. A larger scale project, with more media stories to choose from, that perhaps also included other types of media (i.e., television, radio,

online), could also further examine the qualitative aspects of media stories as they relate to male help-seeking. Such research could help to further determine the precise aspects of media that encourages different types of men to seek help for depression and/or anxiety. This could act could assist in refining and improving mental health campaigns, further informing resources for media professionals, improving media coverage of depression and/or anxiety, and ultimately improve men's help-seeking and mental health.

### ***Conclusions***

Although the media can have a negative impact on public attitudes towards mental health, the findings of this study demonstrate the significant positive impact that newsprint media can have on the help-seeking behaviour of men with depression and/or anxiety. The findings reconfirm the need for articles to provide accurate representations of depression and anxiety, whilst maintaining an optimistic focus on recovery. The use of publicly revered role models can be particularly useful in promoting help-seeking.

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## Appendix A: Questions for the first Consumer Reference Group meeting

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1. Can you think of any examples of media stories about depression or anxiety that have appeared in any media in the past 12 months?
2. Can you think of any examples of media stories that would have prompted someone like you to seek help for depression or anxiety?
  - a. What was it about those stories that would prompt someone to seek help?
3. Are men more likely to seek help if the story is about a man?
4. Are men likely to seek help from a helpline?
5. Does the presence of a helpline phone number in a story prompt men to seek help?
6. Harry O'Brien: Collingwood player who has recently discussed his history of depression (and other mental health issues) in the media. Would this story encourage someone like you to seek help?
  - a. Why or why not?
  - b. What is it about the story that would prompt someone like you to seek or not seek help?
7. Man Therapy: Series of media stories and advertisements starring the fictitious 'Dr. Brian Underwood'. Would this story encourage someone like you to seek help?
  - a. Why or why not?
  - b. What is it about the story that would prompt someone like you to seek or not seek help?
8. Any other comments or questions?

## Appendix B: Questions for the second Consumer Reference Group meeting

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1. How do you think the stories that resulted in an increase in contacts to helplines differed from the other stories?
  - a. Ian Thorpe television interview
  - b. Ian Thorpe book release
  - c. *beyondblue* Get to Know Anxiety Campaign
  - d. *beyondblue* Man Therapy Campaign
2. How do you think the story that resulted in a decrease in contacts to helplines differed from the other stories?
  - a. Major John Cantwell
3. How do you think the stories that resulted in no change in contacts to helplines differed from the other stories?
  - a. Edward Fernon
  - b. Matthew Mitcham
  - c. Harry O'Brien
  - d. David Smiedt
  - e. Ruby Rose
4. Recommendations
  - a. Recommendations for media resources
  - b. Recommendations for further research



## Appendix C: Sensitivity Analysis

### Male helpline activity in the week before and after each media event: Total number, daily mean, daily median and rate ratio

Media Story		Total Contacts	Daily Mean Contacts (SD)	Daily Median Contacts (min-max)	Rate Ratio (95%CI)	p value
Ian Thorpe television interview	Before	3,532	504.6 (64.2)	499 (430-604)	Ref.	
	After	3,884	554.9 (86.0)	584 (427-641)	1.10 (1.05-1.15)	<0.001
David Smiedt	Before	1,045	149.3 (29.2)	164 (98-174)	Ref.	
	After	1,132	161.7 (31.3)	162 (121-201)	1.08 (1.00-1.18)	0.062
John Cantwell	Before	4,070	581.4 (108.4)	625 (447-694)	Ref.	
	After	3,689	527.0 (67.0)	564 (422-593)	0.91 (0.87- 0.95)	<0.001
Edward Fernon	Before	3,619	517.0 (81.1)	564 (400-593)	Ref.	
	After	3,729	532.7 (57.8)	535 (453-614)	1.03 (0.98-1.08)	0.199
Ian Thorpe book release	Before	3,873	553.3 (65.2)	567 (453-641)	Ref.	
	After	3,847	549.6 (72.3)	554 (450-649)	0.99 (0.95-1.04)	0.767
Matthew Mitcham	Before	4,071	581.6 (71.5)	611 (467-650)	Ref.	
	After	4,037	576.7 (82.7)	594 (454-654)	0.99 (0.95-1.04)	0.706
Ruby Rose	Before	4,187	598.1 (67.4)	634 (493-671)	Ref.	
	After	4,541	648.7 (59.6)	663 (551-726)	1.08 (1.04-1.13)	<0.001
<i>beyondblue</i> Get to Know Anxiety campaign	Before	4,339	619.9 (72.8)	633 (519-699)	Ref.	
	After	4,881	697.3 (91.0)	724 (524-783)	1.12 (1.08-1.17)	<0.001
<i>beyondblue</i> Man Therapy campaign	Before	4,735	676.4 (86.4)	720 (540-761)	Ref.	
	After	4,946	706.6 (86.5)	735 (597-817)	1.04 (1.0-1.09)	0.032
Harry O'Brien	Before	5,107	729.6 (49.2)	740 (655-805)	Ref.	
	After	4,958	708.3 (75.1)	714 (606-791)	0.97 (0.93-1.01)	0.138

**Male helpline activity in the three weeks before and after each media event: Total number, daily mean, daily median and rate ratio**

Media Story		Total Contacts	Daily Mean Contacts (SD)	Daily Median Contacts (min-max)	Rate Ratio (95%CI)	p value
Ian Thorpe television interview	Before	10,448	499.4 (51.6)	499 (406-604)	Ref.	
	After	11,337	539.9 (70.4)	539 (427-641)	1.08 (1.05-1.11)	<0.001
David Smiedt	Before	3,120	148.6 (24.0)	148 (98-184)	Ref.	
	After	3,197	152.2 (26.1)	152 (108-201)	1.02 (0.97-1.08)	0.333
John Cantwell	Before	11,910	567.1 (95.4)	600 (378-694)	Ref.	
	After	11,166	531.7 (70.1)	558 (400-641)	0.94 (0.91-0.96)	<0.001
Edward Fernon	Before	11,671	555.8 (96.4)	570 (400-694)	Ref.	
	After	11,429	544.2 (63.7)	554 (450-649)	0.98 (0.95-1.0)	0.111
Ian Thorpe book release	Before	11,166	531.7 (70.1)	558 (400-641)	Ref.	
	After	11,946	568.9 (67.1)	594 (450-660)	1.07 (1.04-1.1)	<0.001
Matthew Mitcham	Before	12,213	581.6 (63.7)	596 (457-665)	Ref.	
	After	12,676	603.6 (81.6)	629 (454-760)	1.04 (1.01-1.06)	0.003
Ruby Rose	Before	13,289	632.8 (70.1)	627 (493-746)	Ref.	
	After	13,156	626.5 (60.9)	641 (517-726)	0.99 (0.97-1.01)	0.413
<i>beyondblue</i> Get to Know Anxiety campaign	Before	13,020	620.0 (66.6)	639 (509-715)	Ref.	
	After	14,109	671.9 (75.1)	678 (524-783)	1.08 (1.06-1.1)	<0.001
<i>beyondblue</i> Man Therapy campaign	Before	14,075	670.2 (71.0)	690 (540-765)	Ref.	
	After	14,838	706.6 (68.5)	709 (597-817)	1.05 (1.03-1.08)	<0.001
Harry O'Brien	Before	14,893	709.2 (55.4)	718 (602-805)	Ref.	
	After	15,349	730.9 (81.3)	765 (576-867)	1.03 (1.01-1.05)	0.009