



NSW Police Force

Media Policy



July 2011

Public Affairs Branch

For Distribution to CPs

Title: NSW Police Force Media Policy

Subject: Policy and Procedures

Command Responsible: Public Affairs Branch

Available to: Restricted

Publication date: July 2011

Version: Three

Review Date: April 2013

Publication Number: 0000217

CAVEAT

This document remains the property of the New South Wales (NSW) Police Force. The contents of this document must not be copied or disseminated to any person, other than to a member of NSW Police Force, without the approval of the Director, Public Affairs Branch.

Copyright of this document is owned by the State of New South Wales through the NSW Police Force © 2010. All rights reserved.

MOD200008317

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Number	Section	Page
	KEY PUBLIC AFFAIRS SERVICES & CONTACTS	3
1	POLICY STATEMENT	4
	1.1 Introduction	4
	1.2 Objective and Scope	5
	1.3 Related Policies	6
2	PUBLIC AFFAIRS BRANCH	7
	2.1 The Police Media Unit	7
	2.2 Media and Communications Strategies	8
	2.3 Media Training	9
	2.4 Media Monitoring	9
	2.5 News Projects Officer and the Multimedia Unit	10
	2.6 Film and Television Liaison Unit	12
3	SPEAKING TO THE MEDIA	13
	3.1 Authority to Comment	13
	3.2 Interviews	15
	3.3 Other Media Engagements	18
4	RELEASE OF INFORMATION	20
	4.1 What can be Released during an Investigation or prior to Arrest	20
	4.2 What can be Released after Proceedings have Commenced	21
5	INFORMATION NOT FOR RELEASE	24
	5.1 Information that must not be Released	24
	5.2 Defamation	27
	5.3 Contempt of Court	28
6	RELEASE OF IMAGES	29
	6.1 'Wanted' Photographs	29
	6.2 Other 'Persons of Interest'	30
	6.3 Convicted Persons	30
	6.4 Police Held Footage	31
	6.5 Releasing CCTV Footage to the Media	31
	6.6 Photographs/Video of Exhibits	32
	6.7 Police Use of Social Network Internet Sites	33
	6.8 Photo opportunities with Politicians	33

For Distribution to CPs

7	PROTECTION	34
	7.1 Protecting Children	34
	7.2 Protecting Witnesses and Victims of Crime	34
	7.3 Protecting Police in Covert Operations	35
8	DESCRIBING PEOPLE TO MEDIA	36
	8.1 Guiding Principles	36
	8.2 Physical Descriptors	36
	8.3 Ethnicity Based Descriptors	37
	8.4 Nationality	38
9	CRIME SCENES AND SEARCH WARRANTS	39
	9.1 Crime Scenes, Search Warrants and the Media	39
	9.2 Media Filming outside Crime Scenes	41
	9.3 Media 'Blackouts'	42
	9.4 Unofficial Recordings	42
	9.5 Restricted Air Space	43
10	MAJOR CRIMES, INCIDENTS, ACCIDENTS AND PUBLIC DISTURBANCE	44
	10.1 Public Information Management & Major Incidents	44
	10.2 When a Strike Force is Formed	45
	10.3 Critical Incidents & Deaths	46
11	CHILD ALERTS	48
	11.1 Activating a Child Alert	48
12	PRIVACY	48
	12.1 Legislated Rights to Privacy	48
	12.2 Information for Non-Operational Purposes	49
13	PERSONAL OPINION & RIGHTS	50
	13.1 Personal Opinions & Political Activities of Staff	50
	13.2 Industrial Associations	51
	13.3 Secondary Employment	51
14	POLICE VIDEOS	52
	14.1 Personal Opinions & Political Activities of Staff	52
	SCHEDULE ONE: AUTHORITY TO RELEASE INFORMATION	53

KEY PUBLIC AFFAIRS SERVICES & CONTACTS

Police Media Unit

The Police Media Unit provides media advisory services 24/7 to all police, from over-the-phone advice to developing media and communication strategies, attending major crime scenes and managing critical issues. **Contact** – E/N 45101.

Media Training

Media training is provided across NSW. Training courses include TV, radio and print examples of best practice and what not to do. **Contact** – E/N 45101.

Media Monitoring

News and current affairs involving the Police Force is monitored, including print, television and radio. Copies of media segments/articles etc can be provided on request. **Contact** – E/N 45101.

Police Multimedia Unit

News Project Officer - sources positive stories from all areas of the Police Force to promote good police work to external media, mainly television news and web video. The footage is edited, legally checked and issued to news media. **Contact** – E/N 45423.

Camera Operators - film police operations for public release. **Contact** – E/N 53219.

Film and Television Liaison Unit

The Film and Television Liaison Unit manages all (non news related) requests to interview staff for television series, films, documentaries, external training videos and mini-series etc. **Contact** – E/N 53230.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 MEDIA ASSISTANCE TO ACHIEVE POLICE GOALS

Policing in NSW attracts more public and therefore media attention than any other topic. However, the media should not be viewed as an obstacle but as a tool we can use to help achieve our goals. The media provides a powerful conduit for us to get key messages out to the community.

The NSW Police Force can use the media to:

- Maximise assistance and information from the public to help solve crime
- Correct or clarify information in the community
- Warn people of dangers or threats
- Create discussion in the community and/or among criminals during investigations
- Deter criminal activity by increasing the perception of detection
- Highlight good police work
- Increase police visibility
- Reassure the community and reduce the fear of crime
- Provide transparency and maintain community faith in policing and our system of justice.

It is important that we communicate to the public what police are doing and have done in apprehending criminals (without jeopardising investigations or revealing police methodology). Positive and proactive police news stories are a proven method to help drive down the community's fear of crime.

Also, the news media is only one tool in a range of communication options available to the Police Force. The Public Affairs Branch can provide advice on options and strategies to effectively communicate with the community and other stakeholders, either in conjunction with the news media or as an alternative.

1.2 OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

1.2.1 POLICY OBJECTIVE

This policy was written to provide practical advice on how to deal with the media. By following it, you will:

- Build positive public opinion of your work and that of your colleagues
- Maximise community assistance to help solve crime; and
- Avoid some of the pitfalls that exist when police deal with the media.

Different information can be released at various points in the process from arrest to charging to appearance in court. This policy sets out what information can be released at what stage of proceedings, and by whom.

Proper checking and authorisation from appropriate commanders is crucial. Careless or unauthorised statements or release of information by police can have drastic consequences, including:

- Violating someone's right to privacy
- Damaging the reputation of innocent people
- Jeopardising police investigations or operations
- Jeopardising court proceedings against people guilty of crimes, who may escape penalty as a result.

Most of what you need to know about dealing with the media is in this policy. If in doubt consult the Media Unit, which is available to help you 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

1.2.2 Policy Scope

All employees are required to comply with this policy. Breaches of the Media Policy may result in disciplinary action and/or criminal or civil sanctions.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the *Code of Conduct and Ethics* and the *Conflicts of Interest: Policy and Guidelines*.

1.3 RELATED POLICIES

Other policies related to this document are set out below:

- *Code of Conduct for Police Service Employees and Political Affiliations*, Strategic Development Unit, 2001
- *Conflicts of Interest: Policy and Guidelines*, Professional Standards Command, 2006
- *NSW Police Force Handbook*, 2008
- *NSW Police Service Incident & Emergency Standing Operating Procedures*, 2001
- *Police Notice 08/01: Use of social networking websites such as YouTube and MySpace by NSW Police Force employees*, Professional Standards Command, 2008
- *Policy for Speaking at or Attending Conferences*, Public Affairs Branch, 2008
- *Registrable Persons – Child Protection Registry Information Disclosure Policy*, State Crime Command Child Protection Squad, 2002
- *Secondary Employment Policy and Guidelines*, Human Resources, 2001
- *Standard Operating Procedures for Abducted Child Alerts and Concern For Child Alerts*, Public Affairs Branch, 2009
- *Standards of Professional Conduct (which includes the Code of Conduct and Ethics)*, Professional Standards, 2007

2. PUBLIC AFFAIRS BRANCH

2.1 THE POLICE MEDIA UNIT

The Police Media Unit (PMU) provides a media advisory service to all police, ranging from over-the-phone advice to attending major crime scenes and managing critical issues.

The Media Unit is open 24/7 and is staffed by both sworn officers and unsworn communications specialists. The Unit provides the following services:

- Writing and distributing media releases on behalf of police
- Producing and executing media strategies in line with operations and major events
- Using Multimedia resources to maximise exposure in electronic media
- Producing and distributing a daily media briefing to the senior executive
- Managing media enquiries from all external media outlets
- Coordinating media conferences and launches
- Providing strategic media advice, focusing on how media opportunities can be best managed for investigative purposes
- Providing an on-call service for media liaison officers to manage the media on site during incidents
- Anticipating and managing media and public responses
- Monitoring news media broadcasts – print, television and radio.

In particular, the Media Unit should be contacted when you are dealing with:

- Suspicious deaths
- Emergencies or disasters
- Major events or arrests
- Child abductions
- Serious crimes
- Controversial issues
- Incidents involving ‘celebrities’ or sporting identities
- Incidents involving police officers or other employees
- Requests to interview, photograph or film police officers
- Positive news stories that promote good police work.

Contact: Media Unit – E/N 45101 or 8263 6101 (which can be called 24/7)

2.2 MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES

The Police Media Unit develops media and communications strategies to assist a variety of policing situations, ranging from the management of major incidents through to forming part of a Local Area Command (LAC) crime reduction strategy.

The Police Media Unit has extensive experience in this field and must be consulted in the development of all police media or communication strategies, including LAC media strategies. The level of Media Unit involvement will depend on the size and sensitivity of the operation or issue.

Media and communications strategies can include, but are not limited to:

- Objectives of the strategy
- Identification of critical issues and threats that could affect the Strategy
- Developing key messages for a wide audience and those targeting any particular groups (eg. youth, elderly, ethnic background etc)
- Creative considerations for best delivering the key messages, for example, the development of posters, artwork, marketing, promotional items or the use of the Police Force Internet or Intranet sites. (See the Corporate Communications Unit, Public Affairs Branch)
- The identification of controlled footage for release
- Development of daily talking points
- Flexibility to allow the strategy to be easily updated over time (first 24 hours, 48 hours and beyond) to meet the changing media environment
- Chain of command approval for the release of information to ensure consistency is maintained in the day-to-day release of information
- Identifying an appropriate spokesperson, including alternatives
- Briefings/preparation of spokespersons for live radio/camera interviews
- Resources needed to deliver the strategy and individual responsibilities
- Processes for liaison and the timely flow of information between the relevant LAC/strikeforce/specialist unit and Executive, Media Unit, and other emergency services or key stakeholders as required (eg. government ministers and departments, including their media units)
- Evaluation of the strategy and capture of media results.

While the media strategy will nominate an appropriate spokesperson, the ongoing co-ordination of the public response to larger media and communications strategies will rest with the Media Unit in consultation with the relevant Strike Force Commander, Corporate Spokesperson or Commander of the area who has carriage of the investigation.

2.3 MEDIA TRAINING

The Police Media Unit has a full time officer dedicated to providing media training to all police across the state. Specialised training modules have been devised to suit the specific needs of police officers and the organisation. The four modules are:

- Inspectors and above
- Sergeant Level
- Basic Media Awareness
- Media Forum (bringing local police and local media together to resolve outstanding issues).

All training courses include contemporary TV, radio and print examples showcasing best practice and what not to do. The courses are interactive and designed to keep your attention.

Contact: Media Unit – E/N: 45101 or 8263 6101 to book training at your Command or Unit.

2.4 MEDIA MONITORING

The Police Media Unit monitors news and current affairs media involving the NSW Police Force - including print, television and radio.

2.4.1 PRINT MEDIA

The Police Media Unit clips articles from all suburban, metropolitan and regional newspapers. Requests for individual copies of articles can be made at any time by calling the Media Unit. The clips also form the basis of a comprehensive daily Media Briefing for the senior executive. The Media Briefing can be accessed via the Intranet at:

Intranet Home Page > News > Executive Media briefing

2.4.2 TELEVISION

Major news and current affairs programs are monitored 24/7 by the Media Unit. The Police Media Unit records the news bulletins on all free-to-air networks – Seven, Nine, Ten, ABC and SBS – and other news and current affair programs. On request, we can dub, edit and forward specific segments. To identify a segment, details of the time, program and station are required. The Media Unit can record specific television programs on request for work purposes if given advance notice.

2.4.3 RADIO

The Police Media Unit records the four free-to-air stations 24 hours a day – 2UE, 2GB, ABC 702 and ABC News Radio. Upon request, we can dub, edit and email specific radio segments if sufficient details are provided. If you hear an interview that you need to copy, please note the exact time and station.

Contact: For all requests on media monitoring please contact the Police Media Unit on E/N 45101 or 8263 6101.

2.5 NEWS PROJECTS OFFICER AND THE MULTIMEDIA UNIT

2.5.1 NEWS PROJECT OFFICER

The News Project Officer works with Regions, Local Area Commands and Specialist Commands to maximise coverage, particularly in the electronic and new media (eg., the Internet), of successful police activities and appeals for public assistance, by working in tandem with the Police Multimedia Unit.

Increasing the level of positive and proactive police news stories in the media is a proven method to help drive down the community's fear of crime, as well as providing the community with the confidence to report crime.

2.5.2 POLICE MULTIMEDIA UNIT

The Police Multimedia Unit provides a controlled and secure in-house filming service for investigative purposes. The Police Multimedia Unit also films police action for release to the media to showcase good police work.

The Police Multimedia Unit particularly films police operations for public release where the presence of commercial media on an operation is unsafe, or there is a risk of breaching operational security.

Trained staff from the Police Multimedia Unit, being Police Force employees, can be deployed to record police action with an assurance of complete security. The resulting footage is edited, legally checked and issued to news media within a few hours.

All footage filmed is first approved by the Commander of the relevant Specialist Unit or LAC prior to any news release. This approval process protects police methodology and the identity of any police who work as undercover operatives.

The Unit also works closely with the Office of the General Counsel to ensure all images released are legally sound and will not breach the terms of warrants or jeopardise court proceedings.

When contacted, the Police Multimedia Unit will seek details on the aim of the operation, the number of police officers likely to be involved, other agency participation and whether the event is likely to attract news media interest. The assessment will determine whether a broader level of support is required from the Public Affairs Branch.

Contact: Police Multimedia Unit – E/N 53219 or 9285 3219
News Projects Officer – E/N 45423 or 8263 6423

2.5.3 CRIME SCENES, SEARCH WARRANTS AND THE POLICE MULTIMEDIA UNIT

As a general rule, the Police Multimedia Unit must not enter a crime scene itself or private property subject to a search warrant or crime scene warrant.

The Police Multimedia Unit can film a crime scene or the private property subject to a search warrant from a public place, or from private property (other than that subject to the crime scene or search warrant) with the consent of the owner/occupier.

In some limited circumstances the Police Multimedia Unit may be able to enter a crime scene or the private property subject to a search or crime scene warrant, in order to film. To do so the Police Multimedia Unit must have the prior consent of the Officer in Charge and the property's owner/occupier. (The owner/or occupier retains the right to later withdraw their consent.) Before this option is pursued, advice must be sought from the Manager, Police Media Unit.

2.6 FILM AND TELEVISION LIAISON UNIT

Any requests to interview police employees or take footage for other than news/current affairs style programs must be referred to the Film and Television Liaison Unit, Public Affairs Branch.

The Film and Television Liaison Unit manages filming requests involving police personnel and resources for both long and short term television series, films, documentaries, external training videos, mini-series, student videos and commercials/advertisements (where appropriate).

All filming requests are subject to strict legal contracts which give the Police Force veto rights prior to broadcast. Amendments requested by the Police Force must be made or the parties will be subject to legal action or contract termination if the offending content is aired.

The Unit also arranges specific technical advice for scriptwriters, authors and production companies and provides access to personnel, facilities, uniforms, and equipment to the film and television industry for research or production purposes. This assistance is given subject to cost recovery where appropriate.

Any requests received by this Unit are subject to review in consultation with the relevant Command and must comply with key corporate objectives.

Contact: Film and Television Liaison Unit – E/N 53230/1, or 9285 3230/1

3. SPEAKING TO THE MEDIA

3.1 AUTHORITY TO COMMENT

Staff must not contact the media in their capacity as Police Force employees to make any comment about any incident, police policy or procedure without prior authorisation. This includes contacting talk back radio and letters or emails to the editor.

Information released publicly must be lawfully obtained and released in accordance with this policy and the *Code of Conduct and Ethics*. Employees must only access, use and/or disclose confidential information if required by their duties and allowed by Police Force policies.

3.1.1 COMMENTING ON POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Only the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Executive Director, Corporate Services, Corporate Spokespeople and Directors/Assistant Commissioners at Region Command level or equivalent are authorised to comment on policy or procedures.

For details on required consultation and authorisation for commenting on policies and procedures, see Schedule 1 section 14.

3.1.2 CORPORATE SPOKESPEOPLE

Corporate Spokespeople are responsible for representing the Commissioner externally and internally on matters concerning particular communities, crimes or policing portfolios. The Spokespeople Program ensures there is expertise and a clear and consistent provision of advice and representation on key corporate issues.

When approached to provide advice, consider whether the relevant Corporate Spokesperson in that subject area is better placed to provide public comment.

The relevant Corporate Spokesperson may provide or authorise the release of information in their area of responsibility where it does not involve current operational incidents.

3.1.3 COMMENTING ON OPERATIONAL ISSUES

Personnel authorised to do so may release information to the media about day to day operational matters (such as traffic accidents, robbery, assaults) for which they have direct responsibility and/or expertise. Release factual information, provided such material:

- Does not breach an individual's rights to privacy
- Does not damage the reputation of innocent people
- Is sensitive to the rights of victims and their families to minimise distress
- Will not hamper or jeopardise investigations or operations; and
- Will not prejudice the rights of the accused to a fair trial.

The absence of information regarding a particular incident or situation often leads to misinformed speculation in the media. If the police do not provide information, the media will source information from elsewhere, including less reliable sources. There are advantages in providing basic facts in a timely fashion, particularly to correct misinformation before it spreads.

The authority to comment on particular types or aspects of police operations is spelt out at Schedule 1 at the end of this policy. See also sections 3 to 6 below for details on what can and cannot be released to the media.

If a person is authorised to speak to the media about issues in a particular portfolio, then the information should first be endorsed by the appropriate Corporate Spokesperson. Also, for matters which have a wider impact, you must refer to the relevant senior officer, such as a Corporate Spokesperson, or seek approval from the appropriate person in your chain of command.

3.1.4 MEDIA CONTACT AND THE POLICE MEDIA UNIT

Local Area Command personnel authorised to do so may provide media comment to local media without contacting the Police Media Unit.

Any media inquiry by regional, state or national media (television, radio and newspaper) must in the first instance be referred to the Police Media Unit, which will assist in determining the best approach for responding to the inquiry. In particular, always seek Media Unit advice if approached by talk back radio or current affairs television.

Always keep the Media Unit informed of any contact you have with media organisations, including local media briefings or interviews.

The Media Unit must also be consulted if a local politician seeks a photo opportunity or information on police activity for public release.

3.1.5 ATTENDING CONFERENCES

The process for obtaining approval to attend or speak at conferences or seminars is set out in the *NSW Police Force Policy for Speaking at or Attending Conferences*. The policy is located at:

Intranet Home Page > Policy & Procedures > Corporate Policies > Conferences - Policy for Speaking at or Attending Conferences

3.2 INTERVIEWS

3.2.1 RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MEDIA

Information is provided to the media on an equal basis. Do not favour one organisation over another with exclusive or special advantages. Any compelling case for an exception, including targeted placement to assist investigations, must be approved by the Director, Public Affairs Branch.

However, when a media organisation initiates its own enquiry (i.e. an exclusive story) we should respect the exclusivity of the journalist's angle. Do not divulge that information to other media outlets unless they ask questions specifically about the same issue.

Staff must not speak on matters outside their area of control or contact the media without prior approval to discuss incidents or matters of policy or procedure. Do not provide media representatives with personal telephone numbers, including mobile phone numbers.

3.2.2 REQUESTS FOR INTERVIEWS

If asked to do a media interview, get approval from the appropriate command level. The authority to comment on particular aspects of police operations is summarised at Section 3.1 above and set out at Schedule 1.

In matters where comment might cause controversy or have wider impact on the Police Force or other agencies, contact the Police Media Unit and seek approval as far up the chain of command as appropriate. The Media Unit will provide advice on approval requirements and help in preparing for the interview once it has been approved.

If you receive a potentially contentious media request, get it in writing and consult the Police Media Unit, prior to seeking approval.

You are responsible for anticipating/responding to issues which might damage the reputation of the Police Force if left unanswered. It is important to take action to correct or clarify media misinformation and speculation.

All police employees who undertake media interviews must take care with their personal presentation. Uniformed officers must ensure that their uniform and appearance complies with the *NSW Police Force Handbook*.

3.2.3 CURRENT AFFAIRS SHOWS AND MAJOR NEWS BULLETINS

Participation in live interviews on current affairs style shows and major news bulletins is restricted to the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners, Executive Director, Corporate Services, Corporate Spokespeople, Assistant Commissioners, and personnel authorised and appropriately trained for that environment. Any compelling case for an exception to this provision should be referred to the Director, Public Affairs Branch, for decision.

3.2.4 KEY CORPORATE POLICE MEDIA MESSAGES

When preparing media releases or planning for media interviews, take the opportunity to include one or more of the following key corporate media messages:

- Police are in your community working hard to address crime and the fear of crime
- Crime prevention is our priority
- Police need the community's help to continue to drive down crime (Crime Stoppers)
- Crime is coming down (as relevant)
- Police encourage personal responsibility
- Police respect people's rights, but will promptly act when the law is broken.

When relevant, publicise the Crime Stoppers Number: 1800 333 000 (one eight hundred, triple three, triple zero). NSW Crime Stoppers is a 24/7 point of contact for the public to anonymously provide information to the Police Force.

3.2.5 GOVERNMENT POLICY

Do not criticise:

- Existing or proposed police policy or wider Government policy or legislation
- Parliament
- A court decision
- Any other government department or agency.

3.2.6 STATISTICS

The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research (BOCSAR) is the primary agency responsible for the release of NSW crime statistics, and for public comment on crime trends and patterns.

Commanders might be called on to comment on local trends within their LACs to public meetings, community groups or local media. A release of statistical information might help correct misunderstandings about levels of crime in local communities, thereby easing fears or overcoming complacency.

Commanders should not be reluctant to highlight improvements in their areas or to address problems indicated by deteriorating BOCSAR figures.

Falling crime statistics are often not publicised by the media, so do not hesitate to repeat them at every opportunity, especially on live radio where your comments cannot be edited out.

You may only release crime statistics relating to your area of responsibility. Confine the information to statements of fact via your crime statistics. Further commentary can be supplied by BOCSAR.

For details on required consultation and authorisation for issuing statistics, see Schedule 1 section 6.

3.3 OTHER MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS

3.3.1 JOINT OPERATIONS

Any release of information following a joint operation involving other State or Federal police forces or departments *must* also be approved by their relevant authority. Contact the Media Unit, who will liaise with the media unit of the other agency to ensure all information is cleared for release. In these instances, joint stand ups with both spokespeople are often organised.

3.3.2 MEDIA ACCOMPANYING POLICE ON OPERATIONS

If an exercise where the media accompany police on an operation is approved, ensure participating media sign a *Media Agreement and Indemnity* form (available from the Police Media Unit). The forms *must* be completed before the exercise begins.

In the exercise briefing, make sure police officers are instructed on the media presence and on what Police Force expectations are, particularly regarding safety and behaviour in these situations.

Take great care with your demeanour, language and procedures during the exercise as they will be closely scrutinised. Ensure your behaviour is always the same as that expected in all public dealings.

3.3.3 EXTENDED MEDIA EXERCISES

Requests from media organisations for camera crews to accompany police for extended periods while officers perform their duties ('reality' TV) must be referred to the Manager, Corporate Communications Unit, Public Affairs Branch.

3.3.4 Misuse of Police Resources

Ensure police resources are not misused and normal standards of dress and behaviour are maintained during a promotional event. Politely decline media requests for photos or footage of inappropriate behaviour such as:

- Driving faster than normal to create a good photographic effect
- Standing on a police car bonnet.

4. RELEASE OF INFORMATION

4.1 WHAT CAN BE RELEASED DURING AN INVESTIGATION OR PRIOR TO AN ARREST

Before a person is arrested the following information may be released:

- A description of the basic facts of the offence (assault, stealing etc) the person is charged with, which can be as detailed or as brief as suits the investigation
- While taking care not to identify a victim; the time and place (street name and town/suburb) but not a house or flat number. Releasing home details could identify the victim
- Taking care not to identify a victim, especially in small communities, the sex, age and suburb/town and occupation of victims. (For example “a 42 year old male podiatrist from Collector” may be too much information in a small town, in which case it may be better to say “a 42 year old male from Collector”)
- The name and rank of the relevant commander or senior investigator (if approved)
- Descriptions of suspects and vehicles, weapons, clothes and other articles involved, if it does not hinder an investigation or later prosecution
- Appeals for public help to locate suspects. Always include the Crime Stoppers Number: 1800 333 000
- Descriptions of remarks made by offenders, but not a direct quote (eg, “The man threatened staff and demanded money”)
- Descriptions of injuries
- The hospital(s) the injured attended (if appropriate)
- Public reassurances about police action to deal with the matter.

4.2 WHAT CAN BE RELEASED AFTER PROCEEDINGS HAVE COMMENCED

Different information can be released at various points in the process from arrest to charging to appearance in court.

It is important that we continue to communicate what police are doing and have done in apprehending criminals. However, proper checking and authorisation from appropriate commanders is crucial. Once a person has been arrested, careless or unauthorised statements or releases of information by police can have drastic consequences. These include:

- Violating someone's right to privacy
- Damaging the reputation of innocent people (defamation)
- Jeopardising court proceedings against people guilty of crimes, who may escape penalty as a result.

4.2.1 IN CUSTODY BUT NOT CHARGED

Once a person is in custody but not yet charged, only say:

- He/she is in custody
- Where they are held
- He/she is being interviewed by police in connection with an incident or offence (helping police with inquiries)
- What the person's age, sex, occupation, suburb/town is (extra care must be taken not to identify children, and also when the person is from a small community, as even minimal information may identify them)
- Where they were arrested (but no house or unit numbers)
- When they were arrested
- The Command(s), Unit(s) or Squad(s) involved in the arrest.

Do not identify the person more than this.

4.2.2 WHAT CAN BE SAID AFTER CHARGING

Once charges are laid, the following information may be added:

- What the charges are (use the wording of the charge)
- The court in which he/she is set to appear
- The date set for appearance
- Whether bail was granted or refused (do not release details of bail conditions)
- A brief account of what Police will be alleging in court.

Commenting on a case that is before the courts, or releasing information about it, can potentially abort a trial. Always:

- Consider the repercussions of proposed actions and statements. An offender may be acquitted because of careless statements made to the media
- Reports of court proceedings must be a fair and accurate reflection of what actually occurred while the court was in session, cover both sides of the argument, and only refer to documents and statements read before the court
- Commentary on proceedings beyond reporting on what actually occurred should be avoided
- Remember that in most cases, courts are public fora where the media can attend to report on evidence and proceedings for themselves
- No one outside the court process should comment until the case has concluded and the period allowed for appeals has passed.

4.2.3 CHARGING POLICE OFFICERS

In order to ensure transparency in the community, the Commissioner has authorised the Police Media Unit to issue a media release if a police officer is charged with an offence, no matter how 'minor' the offence.

If the police officer is currently seconded to or otherwise working for another agency such as the Australian Federal Police, then the NSW Police Force must issue a media release, following consultation with the other agency.

As with any other person charged, the officer's age, sex, occupation, and suburb/town can be disclosed. However, care must be taken not to identify the person more than this, particularly as his/her occupation as a police officer is being disclosed. See sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 for details.

The media release must be authorised by a Region Commander or equivalent. Where the issue is related to a Police Integrity Commission inquiry no public comment can be made by the Police Force unless authorised by the Commissioner of Police. For details on required consultation and authorisation for a public release, see Schedule 1 section 3.

4.2.4 BEFORE SENTENCING OR BEFORE THE EXPIRY OF THE APPEAL PERIOD

When someone has been convicted of a criminal offence but not sentenced, or has been sentenced but the appeal period has not expired:

- Release only factual statements about the conviction and investigation
- Do not make any comment that might adversely affect appeal rights.

If you are unsure about what may be released, seek advice from the Police Media Unit or the Office of the General Counsel.

4.2.5 POLICE BRIEFS OF EVIDENCE AND FACT SHEETS

The release of briefs of evidence and fact sheets is a matter for the court. All media inquires seeking access to briefs of evidence and fact sheets should be referred to the Registrar of the relevant court.

Section 314 of the *Criminal Procedure Act 1986* grants the media the right to apply to the Registrar of the Court for access to documents relating to criminal proceedings (including briefs of evidence and fact sheets) for the purpose of compiling a fair report for publication.

Whether briefs of evidence and fact sheets have been formally tendered in court, and so are available for media inspection under section 314, is determined by the Magistrate at the court at which it was tendered.

5. INFORMATION NOT FOR RELEASE

5.1 INFORMATION THAT MUST NOT BE RELEASED

5.1.1 INVESTIGATIONS, ARRESTS AND COURT PROCEEDINGS

Never release any information that:

Investigation

- Hinders or jeopardises an investigation
- States or implies that a particular crime has been committed (eg, “the victim was murdered with a blunt instrument...”)
- Speculates on the cause of a death
- Goes beyond broad statements of facts to reveal details of evidence which may later be disputed by an alleged offender
- Prejudices a trial
- Reveals distinguishing methodology used by criminals (beware ‘copycat’ criminals) or investigating police.
- Details or speculates about a motive or absence of motive
- Details amounts of stolen money
- Goes beyond broad statements of facts to detail forensic or other examinations or identification ‘line-ups’, or
- Is contrary to a Court order or order of a Coroner prohibiting publication

Offender

- States or implies that someone who has not yet been charged is guilty of a crime (eg, “Police are looking for a man who last night murdered a security guard...”)
- Refers to the psychological state of an alleged offender
- Discusses prior convictions or criminal record
- Includes a photograph of the alleged offender unless there is a clear and overriding public interest in doing so
- Suggests that the alleged offender is being investigated for further possible offences
- Says the alleged offender has or has not made confessions, statements or admissions

- Reveals a refusal to submit to examinations or tests (except breath tests for alcohol)
- Attributes blame; eg. “the Holden travelled on the wrong side of the road and collided with an oncoming ute”
- Lays blame on or belittles anyone

Victim

- Quotes specific conversations with victims
- Identifies a victim of a sexual crime
- Identifies a child who may be guilty of a crime, charged with a crime, involved or reasonably likely to be involved in any way with an apprehended violence order, or is a witness, or
- Distresses victims of crime or their families unless there is an operational need or risk of harm to any person.

5.1.2 STATUTORY PROHIBITIONS ON PUBLICATION

Statutory Prohibitions on Publication have been created in the belief that, without such restrictions, certain groups of people are likely to be subjected to unfair public and media attention. Statutory restrictions cover people such as children, the victims of sexual assault and parties to family law cases. This prohibition includes the publication of information which:

- Identifies a child accused or found guilty of a crime
- Identifies a child who is a witness or otherwise involved in any type of court proceedings
- Identifies a child who is involved in any way with an apprehended violence order or who is reasonably likely to be involved
- Identifies a victim of a sexual crime whether a child or an adult (unless an adult victim consents, or the person is missing or dead and has not lodged a complaint)
- Identifies parties to adoption proceedings or a child involved in adoption proceedings
- Identifies a child as a ward of the state
- Identifies parties to Family Court proceedings
- Identifies a juror, or identifies a former juror without the consent of the former juror

- Discloses the deliberations of a jury during a trial
- Is derived from an interview with a prisoner, without authorisation of prison officials.

In some cases information such as that detailed above can be released with the consent of the Court or of the relevant party or a child's parent or guardian. Contact the Media Unit should you wish to publish information relating to children, jurors, victims of sexual crime, prisoners or parties to Family Court proceedings.

5.1.3 Drugs

Do not release details of the amount, weight or commercial value of stolen *licit* drugs – especially when the site of the theft is mentioned (for example a hospital or pharmacy). Use words like 'a quantity of drugs was stolen'.

The 'potential street value' of *illicit* drugs may be released, as estimated by investigators. Cannabis crops are described by the number of plants.

Following an arrest, the wording of the charges laid may be used to describe the drugs.

5.1.4 Money

Do not disclose the amount of money stolen. Describe the amount in a non-specific way, such as 'a sum of money was taken'. If investigators believe it may help a particular investigation, then the amount involved may be released with the consent of the victim.

5.1.5 Methodology & Tactics

Detailed methodology and tactics used by police or criminals must never be released publicly. Similarly, do not divulge the technological capabilities of the NSW Police Force in monitoring criminals, especially covert monitoring.

5.1.6 000/VKG

No recordings, transcripts or other documents relating to emergency calls to 000 or police radio communications (VKG) can be released without the express approval of the Commissioner or Deputy Commissioners.

5.1.7 PERSONS IN CUSTODY

Do not allow the media access to any person in custody. Do not parade people in custody before the media and ensure they are provided with the means to cover their faces if they wish.

Do not tell the media of visits to crime scenes by accused people. If media personnel are present seek to dissuade them from photographing or filming in a way that would identify the accused people. Publishing photographs which identify the accused may be contempt of court.

5.2 DEFAMATION

Defamation occurs when a publication damages the reputation of a person, not-for-profit organisation, or in some cases, a corporation. Any publication stating or alleging that a person is guilty of a crime is likely to damage their reputation.

To avoid defamation claims, great care must be taken to thoroughly check all facts before releasing to the media any information identifying individuals as criminals. If there is insufficient evidence to back up an allegation, it should not be released. Details such as the names and addresses of any individual mentioned should particularly be checked, as a person can be defamed by mistakenly describing them.

Photographs to be released must be verified and checked to ensure that the people depicted are the correct individuals and are properly identified. Publication of the wrong photograph along side details of a crime, or publication of an incorrectly captioned photograph, are common mistakes that lead to defamation claims.

Defamation is a complex area of law. If there is any doubt about defamation issues associated with the release of information, advice must first be sought from the Media Unit or the Office of the General Counsel.

5.2.1 'ALLEGED OFFENCE' AND DEFAMATION OR CONTEMPT OF COURT

The use of the word "alleged", while softening the meaning of a publication, is not a guaranteed defence to a claim for defamation or contempt of court. If the meaning of the publication taken as a whole is found to be that a person is a criminal or involved in a crime, defamation or contempt of court may still be held to have occurred.

5.3 CONTEMPT OF COURT

Contempt of court occurs when information is published after a person has been arrested which may prejudice court proceedings. If a publication is held to significantly affect proceedings, a judge may order that a trial be aborted and the alleged offender go free. Contempt is likely to occur when information is published that:

- Indicates that an alleged offender is guilty of a crime
- Discloses evidence that may later be disputed in proceedings
- Discloses facts that are not admissible in court, such as the prior criminal record of an alleged offender.

Once an individual has been arrested, publishing a picture of him or her is likely to be in contempt, as the identity of the criminal is often an issue before the Court when an alleged offender pleads not guilty.

In some cases, publishing material which may interfere with later court proceedings can be defended on the grounds of public interest. For example, when an alleged criminal has escaped custody and the public needs to be informed that he or she is dangerous and should not be approached.

Contempt is a criminal offence and the individual officers who authored the material and/or the NSW Police Force may be liable. If there is any doubt about the release of material to the media and the likely impact on court proceedings, the information must not be released but referred to the Police Media Unit or the Office of the General Counsel for advice.

6. RELEASE OF IMAGES

The release of photographic images or video recordings can be a powerful investigative tool for:

- Identifying a Person of Interest (POI)
- Creating more media interest (TV, print and online) resulting in better coverage and the message getting to a wider section of the public.

The release of any photographic image or video recording must be coordinated through the Police Media Unit after endorsement by the Office of the General Counsel and authorisation by the Director, Public Affairs Branch, or Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner where appropriate. Details on specific circumstances are set out below.

6.1 'WANTED' PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs may be released of people for whom first instance or arrest warrants have been issued by a Court, provided the publication of the photo serves a valid operational purpose.

The publication of such photographs is a useful tool, particularly using local and regional media outlets.

The release of images of wanted persons to the public or news media must be approved by the Director, Public Affairs Branch, and is coordinated by the Media Unit.

Release of a photograph must not:

- Be capable of identifying the circumstances of the particular crime/event
- Suggest that the person is guilty of the offence or has a criminal record.

Once the person has been apprehended the Media Unit *must be advised immediately*. The Media Unit will arrange for media organisations to be advised to immediately withdraw the photograph from publication. Failure to do so could result in contempt of court and may jeopardise court proceedings.

This section does not apply to the publication of images on the NSW Police Force Most Wanted site on the Internet. A separate policy exists for this site. Contact the Media Unit for details.

6.2 OTHER 'PERSONS OF INTEREST'

In certain matters, police may issue photographs of individuals they wish to interview in relation to offences but for whom no warrant has been issued. For example, police officers may wish to question a person captured by security cameras misusing an Automatic Teller Machine.

In releasing photographs in this situation:

- It is crucial that no information is issued with the image that canvasses the person's guilt or innocence
- Use words such as "police would like to interview the person in this photo in relation to these matters" or "police believe the man may be able to assist them with their inquiries"
- Do not use words that would allow a reasonable reader to infer the person is guilty of an offence.

Prior to the release of the photograph police must ensure that:

- No other means of identifying the person is available, and
- All persons in the background and location identifiers are either de-identified or removed, and
- The Office of the General Counsel has endorsed the image for release with authorisation by the Director, Public Affairs Branch.

Once the person of interest has been located:

- The officer-in-charge of the investigation must immediately advise the Media Unit. (Failure to do so may jeopardise court proceedings.)
- The Media Unit will then advise media organisations to withdraw the photograph from publication.

6.3 CONVICTED PERSONS

The Crown Solicitor has advised that the NSW Police Force is exempt from the Privacy and *Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (the PPIP Act) for the purpose of releasing photographs of people who have been *convicted* of offences.

The release of photographs of convicted persons to the public or news media must be endorsed by the Office of the General Counsel and authorised by the Director, Public Affairs Branch, or the Office of the Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner.

When considering the release of an image of a person, including publication of bail or AVO conditions, into a targeted community, Local Area Commanders must consider the following issues:

- Is there a real threat that the person will breach bail or AVO conditions?
- Will such a breach present a threat to the safety of the community or a particular section of the community (eg. elderly residents)?

If so, Local Area Commanders must further consider:

- Whether the circumstances leading to the request to publish an image are appropriate
- Whether the public distribution of the image is reasonable
- Alternate means of educating the community
- Loss of control of images distributed in the community (eg. once a person's bail or AVO conditions are lifted) and
- Advising a known offender of the proposed course of action.

The publication of such images must be a last resort measure.

6.4 POLICE HELD FOOTAGE

The release of police held footage to the public is an option available, for example, to assist with investigations. Police held footage includes images captured during interviews (ERISP) or operations such as via in-car video, Taser-cam and Polair.

Staff wishing to release police held footage must contact the Police Media Unit. The Media Unit will assess the proposal and coordinate the approval process, which requires the endorsement by the Office of the General Counsel and authorisation by the Director, Public Affairs Branch, or the Office of the Commissioner, or a Deputy Commissioner.

6.5 RELEASING CCTV FOOTAGE TO THE MEDIA

Prior to the release of CCTV footage, police must ensure that:

- If a POI's face is shown in order to identify them, then the commission of the crime must not be shown. They must not be referred to as an offender
- If showing the commission of the crime is more beneficial to the investigation then any faces must be pixelated. The appropriateness of showing the commission of a crime needs to be judged on a case-by-case basis

- If releasing CCTV of a crime occurring:
 - Consider the effects this may have on a victim (eg, showing a violent crime may cause unnecessary distress)
 - Do not reveal criminal methodology or encourage copy cat offences
- Any victim's face must be pixelated (unless they have given express permission for their face to be shown)
- A juvenile cannot be identified under any circumstances (even in order to seek information on their identity) unless there is permission given by the parent or guardian. When unsure if a person is a juvenile, err on the side of caution rather than release. (Note: If a juvenile is shown in error as it was thought they were an adult prior to identification, please advise the Office of the General Counsel immediately.)

In most cases CCTV footage is not the property of the NSW Police Force. If you want to release CCTV outside of investigative reasons (eg, to show police doing a good job), authorisation must be given by the owner of the CCTV (eg, shopping centre, council, Rail Corp, etc).

Staff wishing to release CCTV footage and still images must contact the Police Media Unit. The Unit will assess the proposal and coordinate the approval, which requires endorsement by the Office of the General Counsel.

6.6 PHOTOGRAPHS/VIDEO OF EXHIBITS

The media can be allowed to film exhibits (such as seizures of drugs or firearms) under controlled conditions that will not create problems during later court proceedings. The release of these images can reassure the public of police successes in removing dangerous items from the streets.

The Police Media Unit must coordinate all media access to exhibits.

If appropriate security and control measures are not possible, the Police Multimedia Unit of Public Affairs can be used to film the exhibits and have the resulting edited footage endorsed for release by the Office of the General Counsel.

6.7 POLICE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORK INTERNET SITES

Point 8 of the *Code of Conduct and Ethics* states that an employee must only access, use or disclose confidential information if required by their duties and allowed by Police Force policy. Clause 75 of the Police Regulation 2008 sets similar requirements.

The disclosure of confidential information by uploading any type of operational material (eg crime scene photos, in-car video footage, CCTV footage, film of police training exercises etc) onto social networking internet sites is a serious breach of legislation and policy, and may lead to criminal charges being laid against offending Police Force employees.

If you are uncertain whether material you have posted on the internet would constitute a breach of law or policy, remove the material immediately and then seek advice from a senior officer such as a duty officer (Professional Standards), Professional Standards manager or your Commander/Director.

See *Police Notice 08/01* for more details.

6.8 PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES WITH POLITICIANS

If a politician requests to be photographed or filmed with a NSW Police Force employee, ensure that the photograph shows you performing official duties. Police Force employees may be photographed with political figures as part of their official duties, such as a Ministerial visit or a forum run by a local Member of Parliament.

Section 178 of the *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912*, states that if a sworn police officer takes any part in any election (except by recording his or her vote or being a candidate) or seeks to influence in any manner any person on the electoral role into giving his or her vote to any candidate, such a person shall incur a penalty.

If employees are unsure what action to take in relation to requests made by political figures they are encouraged to seek the advice of their Commander/Manager, or the Police Media Unit, in the first instance.

7. PROTECTION

7.1 PROTECTING CHILDREN

The identity of children connected with criminal proceedings as defendants, witnesses or otherwise, must never be published. This includes when the person was a *child at the time* of the criminal proceedings.

The *Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987* contains provisions relating to the publication and broadcasting the names of children. See section 5.1.2 above for more details.

7.2 PROTECTING WITNESSES AND VICTIMS OF CRIME

7.2.1 RELEASE OF INFORMATION AND MEDIA APPEARANCES

Trying to assist victims of crime and their families with the added complication of intense media attention can be very difficult.

- Contact the Police Media Unit for assistance to help families prepare statements and make media appearances.
- Media Unit staff can provide advice or attend the scene to help directly.

Information or images must not be released where it may:

- Identify a crime victim or their address (including companies and organisations)
- Identify a witness
- Embarrass or distress a victim (eg, details of sexual assaults or wounds, or missing clothing)
- Reveal details of a crime that might be known only to the perpetrator.

Information can be released which may:

- Identify a deceased person, or missing person who is presumed dead, *only* after next of kin have been informed, and provide their consent, and they have had reasonable time to tell other relatives and friends
- Identify a deceased person when no relatives can be found in Australia and police need to appeal for public information
- Identify victims of crime (including companies and organisations) if this will help the investigation and the victim's permission has been given.

Releasing information about a victim of crime, including an institution or organisation, concerning extortion related threats or crime must be released via the Media Unit, following authorisation from the Office of the Deputy Commissioner and the Office of the General Counsel.

7.2.2 SOCIAL NETWORK INTERNET SITES AND VICTIMS OF CRIME

Reporters routinely check social websites of victims and friends of victims as a source of photographs and other personal information. Police should recommend to victims of crime with social Internet sites that they:

- Remove images and personal information from the Internet site; or
- Put the site onto a non-public or friends-only status; and
- Warn their friends that the media may try and make contact or check their social websites.

Photographs of victims sourced by the media from social websites may also be inappropriate. This situation may be improved by providing the media with a family approved photograph. This gives the family a measure of control as downloaded images are often of poorer resolution, so media outlets will usually replace them with the approved, better quality photograph.

7.3 PROTECTING POLICE IN COVERT OPERATIONS

Commanders should ensure that police performing duties as undercover, street-level and surveillance operatives are protected from media exposure.

Commanders need to put procedures in place so that the release of information including photographs, CCTV, police held or other footage does not release identifying or personal information about covert officers.

8. DESCRIBING PEOPLE TO MEDIA

8.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Words used to describe crime victims, witnesses, suspects and offenders can be highly contentious – especially when they refer to ethnic or racial origin.

When misused or misunderstood, descriptions can damage community harmony, police relations with various communities and hinder investigations, which often heavily depend on community support and information.

Criminal and anti-social behaviour should not be associated with any particular group or community.

There are three categories of approved descriptive terms available to build a useful overall description:

- Physical Descriptors
- Ethnicity Based Descriptors
- Nationality.

Make descriptions as precise as possible, emphasising physical features and avoiding discriminatory or offensive terms. The descriptive terms listed in this section are approved for use. All other descriptive terms must be avoided.

8.2 PHYSICAL DESCRIPTORS

The list of physical descriptors is set out below. If you require further assistance with physical descriptors, please consult the Police Media Unit:

- Build – large, athletic, obese
- Height – estimate in centimetres
- Complexion – fair or pale, olive, tanned
- Hair colour – blonde, ginger, white, grey, brown, black
- Hair length – shaved, short, medium, long
- Hair style – straight, wavy, curly, spiky
- Face shape – round, chiselled, heart shaped
- Eye colour – brown, hazel, black, blue
- Eye type – sleepy, bloodshot, crossed
- Eyebrows – fine, bushy, plucked
- Glasses – sunglasses, plastic, half frame, bifocals

- Mouth – full, wide, hare lip
- Facial hair – moustache, beard, sideburns, goatee
- Nose shape – thin, broad, flared
- Scars, tattoos, physical impairments.

8.3 ETHNICITY BASED DESCRIPTORS

Great care must be taken when using ethnicity based descriptors. The effectiveness of ethnicity based descriptors is limited as they can be the result of emotional or prejudice driven responses from witnesses that may be wrong. Ethnicity based descriptors can also lead other members of a given community to feel they are unfairly under suspicion, creating hostility to police from community groups.

However, ethnicity based descriptors can be valid and useful *if part of* an overall description that could lead to the arrest of an offender. The decision to use an ethnicity based descriptor must be justified on the basis that its inclusion will increase the likelihood of identifying the person of interest.

Ethnicity based descriptors can be legitimately used as long as the following guiding principles are observed:

- Ethnicity based descriptors can be used in the pre-arrest phase, when combined with a physical description
- Ethnicity based descriptors must not be used once a person has been apprehended
- Ethnicity based descriptors must only be used to describe people whose ethnicity is not known.

Use **only**: “The person is of...

- Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander appearance
- African appearance
- Asian appearance
- Caucasian appearance
- Indian Sub-Continental appearance
- Mediterranean/Middle Eastern appearance
- Pacific Islander/Maori appearance, or
- South American appearance.”

Examples:

Pre arrest phase: “Police wish to interview a person who may be able to assist with inquiries into an incident at (location). The person is described as being (male/female) of (build), (height), (complexion), (hair colour), etc perceived as being of (ethnicity based descriptor), last seen in (street name or other location)”.

Post arrest phase: “Police today arrested and charged a (age) year old (suburb if appropriate) man/woman in relation to an incident at (location) on (date). The person is due to appear in (location) Court on (date)”.

8.4 NATIONALITY

A person’s nationality has no bearing on their appearance, so it is irrelevant in a physical description. However, in situations where a person’s nationality is relevant, the information can be released.

Reasons where it is acceptable to release a person’s nationality include:

- When fears are held for the safety of a foreign national travelling in Australia
- When information about an offender, crime victim or missing person is needed from other people of the same nationality or language group.

9. CRIME SCENES AND SEARCH WARRANTS

9.1 CRIME SCENES, SEARCH WARRANTS AND THE MEDIA

The media must never be allowed to enter a crime scene or premises being searched under a search warrant.

The Police Multimedia Unit can provide a controlled and secure in-house filming service for investigative purposes. The Police Multimedia Unit can also film police activity for release to the media to showcase good police work and help reduce community fear of crime. See section 2.5 for details.

9.1.1 MEDIA ASSEMBLY AREA

The media are a resource, and must be suitably managed to use the resource effectively. If required, set up a designated and easily identifiable media vantage point/assembly area.

A media assembly area:

- Can provide a line of sight to the incident, if safe to do so, and enable the media to report on the incident
- Secures the safety of the media
- Protects the crime scene
- Ensures the media do not interfere with police action or restrict access to the crime scene.

Exactly where and how the media area is set up is a decision for the senior police officer at the scene.

9.1.2 ESTABLISHING A CRIME SCENE AND EXCLUSION RIGHTS

Under section 91 of the *Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002*, a police officer may establish a crime scene on premises in any way that is reasonably appropriate in the circumstances.

Once a crime scene is created, a police officer must, if reasonably appropriate, give the public notice that the premises are a crime scene. Notice can be given by the use of crime scene tape or some other form of notice, such as police officers standing guard and verbally warning the public of the presence of the crime scene, its location and boundaries.

Once a crime scene is established police officers have the power to:

- Direct a person, including members of the media, to leave the crime scene or remove a vehicle, vessel or aircraft from the crime scene
- Remove from the crime scene a member of the media who fails to comply with a direction to leave the crime scene
- Remove from the crime scene a vehicle, vessel or aircraft if a member of the media fails to comply with a direction to remove it
- Direct a member of the media not to enter the crime scene
- Prevent a member of the media from entering the crime scene
- Prevent a member of the media from removing evidence from or otherwise interfering with the crime scene or anything in it and, for that purpose, detain and search the person
- Remove or cause to be removed an obstruction from the crime scene.

See section 95 of the *Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act* for the complete list of police powers at crime scenes.

Any action that police officers take should be reasonable and justified, having regard to the need to preserve the integrity of the crime scene.

Common sense and discretion need to be exercised where the parameters of the crime scene may not be immediately clear. Generally speaking, the media is entitled to film or photograph at crime/accident scenes. In fact, media footage of an incident may subsequently help police when making public appeals for information or assist in identifying offenders.

If media personnel put their arms, boom mikes or cameras over the crime scene tape, but not their bodies, they have still entered the crime scene. However, in deciding how to react to this situation, police officers should assess what effect, if any, the overhang of boom mikes and cameras etc., has on the integrity of the crime scene, and whether it actually hinders police in performing their duties. If media actions do not affect the crime scene or police performance there should be careful consideration of all the factors involved before any action is taken.

9.2 MEDIA FILMING OUTSIDE CRIME SCENES

9.2.1 MEDIA RIGHTS TO FILM FROM OUTSIDE CRIME SCENES

Police have no specific rights or powers to do anything to prevent the media taking photographs of or filming police officers or family members at crime scenes, if the media remain out of the crime scene itself and obey all other laws.

If the media are in a public place outside of the crime scene they have a general right to film the crime scene and the persons within it. Reporters in a public location can only be requested to move on if there are legitimate safety or operational reasons that provide a legal power to do so.

The media can also take photographs or film crime scenes or searches from private property (other than the property subject to the crime scene or search warrant) if they have the permission of the owner/occupier. The property owner or occupier has the right to refuse access to the media.

Camera footage taken from a public place, or a privately owned place with the consent of the owner/occupier, does not contravene the *Surveillance Devices Act 2007*. The footage can be taken in these circumstances even if the crime scene or activity itself is not in a public place.

It is NOT the job of police officers at crime scenes to decide on whether legally obtained media footage or photographs are insensitive or in poor taste. What the media may publish is governed by various broadcasting laws and codes of conduct.

Conversations held openly in public places, where the parties to the conversation should reasonably expect that it might be overheard by someone else, are generally not considered to be 'private conversations' and so are not protected by the *Surveillance Devices Act 2007*. Journalists and camerapersons may make recordings of events and record, monitor and listen to conversations which are not defined as private conversations.

9.2.2 INTERFERING WITH MEDIA PERSONNEL

Unless police officers have a lawful right to interfere with or use force against media personnel, police should not physically grab or cover cameras or media equipment (for example, by placing something over or very close to the lens).

If police officers try to grab or cover cameras or interfere with media personnel, this action will become the focus of the media story and the officers may be liable for prosecution for assault or trespass on the person concerned.

At a reasonable distance from the media, police officers can shield themselves or other persons or objects from the view of the media or their cameras. However, discretion should be exercised on the benefits of this action as it may then become the focus of the story.

Generally, police officers are not authorised to confiscate media tape/footage. Only if the actual taking of photographs or footage constitutes an offence, do police have the power to arrest the person who committed the offence and the power to seize the tape, photographs and footage as evidence of the crime.

9.3 MEDIA 'BLACKOUTS'

A request for a media blackout can only be made in the most exceptional circumstances, usually due to a risk to life. A media blackout request must be made by the Assistant Commissioner, Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command, the appropriate Region Commander, other Assistant Commissioners or in the event of a siege, the operational commander or senior police negotiator.

During a crisis it may be appropriate to ask all media to temporarily refrain from reporting an incident, for example, a siege where hostages' lives are directly threatened and the offender is known to be watching media coverage.

9.4 UNOFFICIAL RECORDINGS

Advances in personal digital imaging and recording devices mean that there is widespread ability amongst members of the public to capture photographs and video images.

When at the scene of an incident or operation, be aware that people other than official media representatives may record the presence, actions and words of police officers for other than official purposes.

Members of the public have the right to take photographs of or film police officers, and incidents involving police officers, which are observable from a public space, or from a privately owned place with the consent of the owner/occupier.

Generally speaking, if a person takes photographs or videos police officers, operations or incidents from a public space, *police do not have the power to:*

- Prevent the person from taking photographs or filming
- Confiscate photographic or filming equipment
- Delete images or recordings, or
- Request or order a person to delete images or recordings.

If police officers try to confiscate equipment or interfere with members of the public to delete images or recordings, the officers may be liable for prosecution for assault or trespass on the person concerned.

Police may have powers to prevent a member of the public from taking photographs or filming, or confiscate equipment or deleting images only in certain circumstances, such as:

- Where they have been given special powers under anti-terrorism legislation; or
- Where the taking of photographs or filming images amounts to offensive conduct under the *Summary Offences Act 1988*.

9.5 RESTRICTED AIR SPACE

If the presence of media helicopters over a scene could hamper police operations or endanger the safety of persons or the environment:

- Contact the Duty Operations Inspector (DOI) to have the air space restricted and
- Inform either the Media Liaison Officer (MLO) on scene or the Police Media Unit, who will liaise with newsrooms to arrange a satisfactory outcome.

The DOI can request Airservices Australia (Air Traffic Control) to restrict pilots and aircraft from certain air space.

Personal annoyance at media interest in a particular incident or investigation is not sufficient grounds to request such a restriction.

10. MAJOR CRIMES, INCIDENTS, ACCIDENTS AND PUBLIC DISTURBANCE

10.1 PUBLIC INFORMATION MANAGEMENT & MAJOR INCIDENTS

The Public Affairs Branch will manage media advisory services and the co-ordination of public information for any event that may lead to a prolonged or intense level of media interest.

If a major incident arises and/or the media presence at an incident is significant, advise the Police Media Unit immediately. A Media Liaison Officer or Police Spokesperson will be assigned to assist Commanders in managing public information in response to a major incident or public disturbance.

Until the arrival of a Spokesperson or Media Liaison Officer, the commander at the scene must set aside a safe media marshalling area which may provide a line of sight to the incident but does not interfere with the integrity of police action or restrict access to the scene.

On arrival at the scene, the Police Spokesperson or Media Liaison Officer must be thoroughly briefed by the commander. The Spokesperson or Media Liaison Officer will:

- Work with the on-site commander
- Work with other emergency service personnel if applicable
- Develop a media and communications strategy (see section 2.2).

Interviews can be given by either the commander at the scene or the Police Spokesperson.

Briefings to the media should, when required, alert the media to any need for sensitive reporting for the duration of the incident. In particular, advise the media of any potential problems in the coverage that could place lives at risk, such as reporting of:

- The apparent emotional state of offenders or hostages
- Any demands made
- The number, type and deployment of police resources.

Be mindful that journalists may seek to engage officers at incidents in conversation. Always assume a camera or microphone is on and that your comments will be used. Refer any request for official comment to an authorised officer or Media Liaison Officer.

In prolonged situations, the media should be briefed at regular intervals to avoid them seeking information from other, potentially uninformed, sources. Equally, the absence of information often leads to misinformed media speculation. There are advantages in providing ongoing basic facts, particularly to correct misinformation before it spreads.

For details on authorisation for issuing media releases at major incidents, see Schedule 1 section 11. For media management and authorisation to release information in relation to sieges, see Schedule 1 section 17.

10.1.1 WHERE AN INCIDENT COMMAND AND CONTROL SYSTEM IS IN PLACE

As part of the Incident Command and Control System (ICCS), the Public Affairs Branch will assign a dedicated Media Liaison Officer/Public Information Officer to the Police Commander's Command Team. A detailed media and communications strategy must be developed in conjunction with the Police Commander (see section 2.2 for further details).

10.1.2 WHERE THE INCIDENT COMMAND AND CONTROL SYSTEM IS NOT REQUIRED

For major situations that do not require an Incident Command and Control System, eg. crimes, fires, major road accidents, chemical spills, industrial incidents, a Media Liaison Officer will be deployed to the scene as soon as possible.

10.1.3 EMERGENCY AND TERRORIST INCIDENTS

In the event of an emergency or terrorist incident, the Public, Information Functional Area Co-ordinator (PIFAC), Public Affairs Branch, via the Public Information Functional Area Supporting Plan (PIFASP) has the responsibility to coordinate media resources, provide for the controlled release of public safety and/or warning messages and public information, and to coordinate the interaction between all agencies.

10.2 WHEN A STRIKE FORCE IS FORMED

When a Strike Force is formed which is likely to attract a high level of public interest the Public Affairs Branch can assign a Media Liaison Officer to develop a detailed media and communications strategy in conjunction with the Commander of the Strike Force (see section 2.2 for further details).

The Media Unit will assume responsibility for media management issues throughout the life of the incident or Strike Force in consultation with the relevant Strike Force Commander, Corporate Spokesperson or Commander of the area who has carriage of the investigation.

A Strike Force may be defined as a team of people formed to investigate serious, major or organised crime or conduct inquiries into the outcomes of investigations. A Strike Force's operations are governed by investigation agreements and terms of reference.

10.3 CRITICAL INCIDENTS & DEATHS

A Critical Incident may arise where a person dies or is seriously injured in an incident involving a level of police interaction. These include:

- Shootings – both by police and when an officer is shot
- Fatal or serious accidents involving police, eg. pursuits
- Deaths or serious injuries in custody
- Self harm or attempted suicides in custody
- Deaths or serious injuries during police operations.

Following a critical incident:

- The appropriate Region Commander is responsible for any public statements
- The Region Commander may request a Police Spokesperson or Media Liaison Officer to attend to manage media interest at the scene.

As there is likely to be significant media interest in a matter where police are being investigated, the Media Unit may provide the media with the basic approved facts including the time, date and general nature of the incident.

A critical incident will be independently investigated by specialist police from external Commands and are subject to independent review.

Never release the names of people who have died until next of kin have been informed and have had time to tell other family members. The next of kin should also be approached for permission to release the name to the media.

For authorisation to release information on critical incidents, see Schedule 1 section 7. For missing persons, see Schedule 1 section 13.

10.3.1 APPARENT OR SUSPECTED SUICIDES

You may release brief details of non suspicious deaths, but police media statements should never speculate about cause of death, which is a matter for the Coroner to determine. If unsure, consult the Office of the Coroner.

If releasing information about an apparent or suspected suicide, do not indicate, infer or confirm suicide or apparent or suspected suicide. Refer to the death as 'non-suspicious'. Do not indicate the existence of a suicide note or other similar writings, or disclose their content.

10.3.2 DEATHS, LIKELY DEATHS AND THE CORONER

Deaths arising from critical incidents must be reported to the Coroner. During the investigation of critical incidents involving deaths, no public comment is to be given without the express authorisation of the relevant Region Commander or specialist Commander equivalent *and* the Coroner.

Care must also be exercised where the nature of injuries are such that death may be likely. In these cases, it would be prudent to discuss any proposed public comment with the Coroner's Office before any statement is made.

Police media statements should never speculate about cause of death, which is a matter for the Coroner to determine. Any media inquiries on cause of death should be referred to the Coroner's Office.

Should false information about a death circulate, contact the Police Media Unit who will notify the Coroner and seek permission to correct it. Any clarifying statement must be approved by the Coroner's Office. For further information on the Coroner's role, including authorisation, see Schedule 1 section 5.

11. CHILD ALERTS

11.1 ACTIVATING A CHILD ALERT

Child Alerts assist in the safe return of a child who has been abducted. Child Alerts are issued to the media and other external organisations to immediately saturate the vicinity of the incident with details of the abduction, so that the community can help locate the child.

Child Alerts can only be issued by the Police Media Unit. A Child Alert is requested by a Local Area Commander via the Duty Operations Inspector in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures.

If there are potential kidnapping or ransom issues, or the person is over 16 years of age, then a Child Alert will not be issued and other means of seeking community assistance may be implemented as appropriate, such as general media releases and appeals for assistance. Contact the Police Media Unit for more information.

For full details on Child Alerts, the Standard Operating Procedures are located at:

Intranet Home Page > Policy & Procedures > Operational Policing > Child Alert SOPs.

12. PRIVACY

12.1 LEGISLATED RIGHTS TO PRIVACY

Section 27 of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (the PPIP Act) states that the NSW Police Force is not required to comply with the Information Protection Principles set out in the Act, except when exercising educational and administrative functions.

Generally, information may be released to the media in order to further the mission and functions of the NSW Police Force, as set out at section 6 of the *Police Act 1990*.

Despite the broad exemption for operational purposes, the following privacy principles do apply to all media disclosures by the NSW Police Force.

12.1.1 INFORMATION MUST BE ACCURATE AND RELIABLE

Personal information released in accordance with this policy must be accurate and reliable, with facts clearly differentiated from opinion or suspicions.

If personal information is not confirmed as factual, but is deemed appropriate to disclose for operational reasons, then the nature of the information must be clearly conveyed to the recipient along with the rationale for disclosing unsubstantiated information.

12.1.2 DISCLOSED INFORMATION SHOULD BE PROPORTIONATE TO THE PURPOSE OF THE DISCLOSURE

Personal information that is disclosed about an individual should be limited to that information which is required to achieve the operational purpose of the disclosure.

12.1.3 PERSONAL AFFAIRS OF AN INDIVIDUAL

Personal information is defined at section 4(1) of the PPIP Act as information or an opinion about an individual whose identity is apparent or can reasonably be ascertained from the information or opinion.

For the purposes of this section, the *personal affairs* of an individual includes information relating to an individual's political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, ethnic or racial origin, trade union membership, health or sexual activity. Such information must not be disclosed unless there is an operational need or a risk of harm to any person.

12.2 INFORMATION FOR NON-OPERATIONAL PURPOSES

In almost all circumstances, the NSW Police Force collects information for operational purposes. Nonetheless, there may be rare occasions when the Police Force can assist victims of crime and their families by obtaining personal information for release to the media. In such circumstances informed consent to collect and release the information must be obtained from the individual or their next of kin.

For example:

Taking a photo from the home of a murder victim and releasing it to media without family permission could be intensely distressing to relatives and a terrible violation of their privacy.

However, discussing the media interest in such a photo with a family, assisting them to prepare a statement for media, identifying a suitable family representative to be interviewed and acting as intermediary between the family and the media could be one of the most valuable services anyone could provide. This action shields the family from further intrusion and distress. While there is no obligation on the Police Force to fulfil this role, it should be duly considered in discussion with the Police Media Unit.

13. PERSONAL OPINION & RIGHTS

13.1 PERSONAL OPINIONS & POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF STAFF

Every employee has the right to express an opinion in public debates, letters to the editor, calls to talk back radio and the like. Employees also have the right to join political parties and hold and express political views as any other NSW citizen.

However, personal opinions and political activities must be expressed or undertaken in the capacity of a private citizen and not as a NSW Police Force employee.

Do not refer to your position or profession when expressing an opinion or participating in public fora in a private capacity. Do not wear a police uniform when expressing private opinions. Any comments made must not be seen to represent the official view of the Police Force, or to compromise your ability to serve the Government of the day in a politically neutral manner.

In expressing opinions or undertaking political activities in a private capacity, employees must also ensure that there is no conflict of interest with their role as a Police Force employee.

For further information, see the *Code of Conduct and Ethics*, the *Conflicts of Interest: Policy and Guidelines*, and the *Code of Conduct for Police Service Employees and Political Affiliations*.

13.2 INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATIONS

If a Police Force employee liaises with the media on behalf of a union or industrial association, ensure that your appearance, status and comments are not misinterpreted as representing official Police Force views or policies.

When speaking as an industrial representative:

- Identify yourself by name and position in the union or association, not by position in the Police Force
- Do not wear a police uniform
- Make sure your comments are recognised as being made on behalf of the union, not the Police Force.

If you are unsure about these requirements further advice can be sought from the Police Media Unit.

13.3 SECONDARY EMPLOYMENT

Police Force employees must not engage in secondary employment without the approval of the Commissioner of Police or delegate.

Police Force employees working within the media industry on approved secondary employment must not:

- Provide advice on policing issues, practices or procedures
- Arrange access to NSW Police Force staff, equipment or resources, or
- Engage in conduct that may constitute a conflict of interest with the employee's Police Force duties and/or impinge on the integrity of the NSW Police Force within the community.

Refer to the *Secondary Employment Policy and Guidelines* and the *Conflicts of Interest: Policy and Guidelines* for further information.

14. POLICE VIDEOS

14.1 MUSIC COPYRIGHT

The Public Affairs Branch produces a variety of short videos for internal and external viewing. Other police commands are also adept at producing their own videos, especially for internal training and promotion purposes.

Neither the NSW Government nor the NSW Police Force are exempt from the need to obtain copyright permission to use commercial music on these types of videos.

Any member of the NSW Police Force who uses commercial music without obtaining the relevant permission or licence exposes themselves and the organisation to the risk of breaching copyright legislation and/or legal action (even if the music is for internal use only).

In exceptional circumstances, the rights for commercial music can be purchased but only with the approval from the Director, Public Affairs Branch. A rights fee will then be negotiated with the copyright owner or owners.

To minimise costs, any member of the NSW Police Force needing music for their videos should use “production music” which is available by contacting the Police Multimedia Unit.

Production music, also known as stock music or library music, refers to music produced and owned by production music libraries and licensed to customers for use in film, television, radio and other media.

The Multimedia Unit has access to a number of production tracks and can advise you in relation to a track to suit your needs.

The Multimedia Unit can be contacted on 02 9285 3219 or 0411 400 488.

SCHEDULE 1: AUTHORITY TO RELEASE INFORMATION

The Authority to comment on particular aspects of police operations is detailed in the following table. The relevant Corporate Spokesperson may provide or authorise the release of information in their area of responsibility where it does not involve current operational incidents.

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST	AUTHORITY	COMMENT
1. Abduction, extortion and product contamination	Commanding Officer after consultation with the Police Media Unit or State Crime Command Media Liaison Officer as relevant.	Information about an abduction, extortion or product contamination in progress must never be released unless authorised by the commanding officer after consultation with the Police Media Unit and the people or organisations concerned. Key stakeholders will develop a strategic media plan in liaison with the Police Media Unit to manage such instances. It is crucial to manage public information during this type of incident. Mishandling the release of information can cause major commercial damage, public danger or anxiety and even loss of life.

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST**AUTHORITY****COMMENT****2. Bomb threats and suspicious objects**

Police Media Unit to manage flow of information to media.

The level of detail to be publicly released about any device is determined by the:

- Operational Commander
- Asst Commissioner, Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command, and
- Bomb Disposal Unit.

The Police Media Unit must be advised of any explicit threat or suspicious package requiring a police response.

The Media Unit will manage the flow of information to the media in co-operation with other government and external organisations and after consultation with the Operational Commander, Asst Commissioner, Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command and the Bomb Disposal Unit.

Media must not be allowed to film bomb squad officers or their vehicles and must not be given close access to, or detailed descriptions of, explosives or other devices - whether real or not.

The name of a person or organisation targeted must not be released without formal consent from the affected party.

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST

AUTHORITY

COMMENT

3. Charging of police officers or police employees.

Appropriate Region Commander or equivalent in specialist areas, or the Deputy Commissioners, Executive Director, Corporate Services or Commissioner.

In the case of a Police Integrity Commission inquiry no public comment is to be made unless authorised by the Commissioner.

The Commissioner has authorised the Media Unit to issue a media release if a police officer is charged with an offence, no matter how 'minor' the offence.

Comment about the charging of police officers or other employees is restricted to the appropriate Region Commander or equivalent in specialist areas, or higher.

Upon the arrest or charging the relevant LAC or specialist unit must advise the Region Commander or equivalent in specialist areas. The relevant Deputy Commissioner or the Executive Director, Corporate Services, must also be informed.

If the police officer is seconded to another organisation (eg the Federal Police) the NSW Police Force must consult with the other agency before issuing the information. See section 4.2.3.

Consult the Director, Public Affairs Branch, to assess the level of interest the incident is likely to attract, and on the content of the Media Release.

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST

AUTHORITY

COMMENT

4. Child Sex Offences & Registrable Persons

Police Media Unit.
Commander, Sex Crimes Squad or the
Commander, State Crime Command.

The Registrable Persons - Child Protection Registry Information Disclosure Policy governs the release of information about registrable persons who have provided personal information as required under the *Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000*.

Sections 4.4 to 4.6 of the *Information Disclosure Policy* provides for the public release of information about registered persons in the following situations:

- To comment on information already in the public domain
- To issue general warnings where there is a risk to the community, and
- To investigate an offence or to locate an offender for law enforcement purposes.

This information should only be publicly disclosed with the approval of the LAC or Specialist Commander.

The release of personal information in relation to a registrable person to member(s) of the public or a non-government agency should only be disclosed with the approval of the Commander, Sex Crimes Squad or the Commander, State Crime Command. This is outlined in Section 5 of the *Information Disclosure Policy*.

If in doubt on any aspect of the *Information Disclosure Policy*, contact the Child Protection Registry, EN 28657 or 88358657.

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST

AUTHORITY

COMMENT

5. Coronial matters: Police Media Unit or Coroner's Office

- Role of the Coroner's Office
- Likely fatal injuries
- Formal identification
- Cause of death
- Next of kin
- Suicide
- Death of "celebrities"

Police Media Unit or Coroner's Office.

During investigations involving deaths, no public comment should be made without the authorisation of the relevant Region Commander or specialist Commander equivalent and the Coroner, following consultation with the Media Unit. See section 10.3.2.

Role of the Coroner's Office: Police media statements should never speculate about cause of death. It is legally a matter for the Coroner to determine and media inquiries should be referred to the Coroner's Office.

The roles and functions of the State Coroner and Deputy State Coroner include:

- To ensure that all deaths, suspected deaths, fires and explosions are properly investigated, and
- Holding an inquest/inquiry where desirable.

Public speculation or commentary about matters before the Coroner has the potential to jeopardise coronial proceedings.

Should false information about a death circulate, contact the Media Unit, which will notify the Coroner and seek permission to correct it. Any clarifying statement must be approved by the Coroner's Office.

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST	AUTHORITY	COMMENT
Coronial matters (cont):		<p>Where injuries are highly likely to be fatal: If a person's injuries are such that death is highly likely, then it would be prudent to also refer any proposed media comment to the Coroner's Office for authorisation.</p> <p>Formal identification: If the condition of victims is such that visual identification is unreliable, names should only be released once formal identification of a body has been effected. If such a media release is urgent for investigative reasons, the Coroner must approve the release.</p> <p>Post Mortem Examinations Results: The release of post mortem examination results must only occur after careful consideration with the authorisation of the Coroner's Office. Refer to the Coroner and Police Media Unit.</p> <p>Supply only brief details to the media, simply indicating the probable cause of death and/or whether further forensic tests are needed. Do not release detailed descriptions of injuries recorded during an examination.</p> <p>Cause of death: The Coroner should also approve any release of details about the manner of a death. Cause of death may only be published after the Coronial postmortem examination is complete. Media inquiries should be referred to the Police Media Unit or the Coroner's Office.</p>

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST	AUTHORITY	COMMENT
Coronial matters (cont):		<p>Next of kin: Never release the names of people who have died until next of kin have been informed and have had time to tell other family members. The next of kin should also be approached for permission to release the name to the media.</p> <p>Suicide: Suicide should never be stated or implied by police media statements. It is for the Coroner to decide if suicide has occurred. The death can be referred to as 'non-suspicious'.</p> <p>Never reveal or confirm the existence of suicide notes or their contents.</p> <p>If it is operationally necessary to confirm suicide, you must get the Coroner's permission. The Media Unit can assist with this process.</p> <p>Death of a "celebrity": Advise the Police Media Unit, which will advise the Coroner, as soon as you learn of the death of a well known person or celebrity.</p> <p>Only information that the Coroner approves should be released.</p>

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST	AUTHORITY	COMMENT
<p>7. Critical incidents</p>	<p>Region Commander or specialist Commander equivalent and, where relevant, the Coroner.</p>	<p>As there is likely to be significant media interest in a matter where police are being investigated, the Police Media Unit may provide the media with the basic approved facts including the time, date and general nature of the incident. Also refer to section 10.3.</p> <p>During the investigation phase, no public comment should be given without the express authorisation of the relevant Region Commander or specialist command equivalent and, where relevant, the Coroner.</p> <p>Care must also be exercised where the nature of injuries are such that death may be likely. In these cases, it would be prudent to discuss any proposed public comment with the Coroner's Office before any statement is made.</p>
<p>8. Department of Community Services cases</p>	<p>Jointly by the Media Units of the NSW Police Force and Department of Community Services.</p>	<p>DOCS and the NSW Police Force work together to detect, protect and rescue children who are victims of violence or abuse or at risk of such abuse. It is unlawful to reveal the identity of children who are DOCS clients.</p> <p>Release of information about cases involving DOCS must be approved by both agencies.</p>

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST	AUTHORITY	COMMENT
<p>9. Emergencies - (where police are not the prime responding agency); ego major fires).</p>	<p>Relevant LAC or nominee after consultation with the Police Media Unit.</p>	<p>No public comment is to be made about incidents primarily involving the work of other agencies. Police Force comment must be restricted to the police role at the scene, ego alternate traffic arrangements, crowd control.</p> <p>Fire: specifics about likely cause, contents of a building, damage to surrounding premises, number of fire fighters etc must be left to the Fire Brigade to provide comment.</p> <p><i>Example: "fire destroyed industrial premises at Smithtown at 10am this morning and there were no reported injuries - access to George St will be blocked until 1pm with traffic being diverted via Jones St". Refer callers to the NSWFB for further detail.</i></p> <p>Ambulance: comments about ambulance response times, the number of units in attendance and the nature of injuries or people treated, must be made by representatives of the Ambulance Service.</p> <p>Consider holding a joint press briefing - consult the Police Media Unit for advice.</p>

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST	AUTHORITY	COMMENT
10. Escapees	Police Media Unit in consultation with the Department of Corrective Services.	<p>Information released to the media must be prepared in consultation with the Department of Corrective Services.</p> <p>Escapees may be identified by name with a photograph released to the media. The release is to be coordinated through the Police Media Unit. If 'mug shot' photos are used, the police identification brooches should be cut or covered on the released image.</p> <p>If the escapee is considered dangerous an appropriate public warning should be developed requesting members of the public not to approach the person but to report any sighting to police or Crime Stoppers.</p> <p>If an escapee has been convicted of a serious crime such as murder or sexual assault, all effort should be made to notify any victims and their families before the media report the escape.</p>

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST	AUTHORITY	COMMENT
<p>11. Major crimes, incidents, accidents, public disturbance, critical incidents</p>	<p>Commanding Officer - until arrival of Police Spokesperson or Media Liaison Officer.</p> <p>The Police Media Unit will assume responsibility for media management issues throughout the life of the incident.</p>	<p>A Police Spokesperson or Media Liaison Officer will be assigned to the Police Commander's Command Team (in accordance with the Incident Command & Control System) or deployed to the scene of a major crime, incident or accident; eg. large public disturbance, fires, floods, storms, major road accidents, plane crashes, chemical spills, industrial accidents. For details see section 10.</p> <p>A media and communications strategy will be implemented to support the operation (see section 2.2).</p>
<p>12. Marches, rallies and demonstrations</p>	<p>Police Media Unit.</p>	<p>The Police Media Unit will deploy a Media Liaison Officer to work closely with the forward Commander at the scene.</p> <p>The Media Unit representative will advise on time, place and content of any media interviews that are needed.</p>

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST	AUTHORITY	COMMENT
13. Missing Persons	Police Media Unit, Missing Persons Unit or relevant Commander.	<p>Always get permission from next of kin before releasing identifying information about missing persons.</p> <p>If permission cannot be secured and there is a pressing concern for the person's safety or welfare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release a photograph along with name, age, town or suburb and physical description • Information about the disappearance, and • Any relevant medical information.
14. Policies and procedures ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner • Deputy Commissioners • Executive Director, Corporate Services • Directors/Assistant Commissioners at Region Command level or equivalent • Relevant Corporate Spokesperson 	<p>The Corporate Spokesperson should be consulted prior to commenting on police policies and procedures in their area of responsibility.</p> <p>Additionally, where possible, the corporate spokesperson should address the media where comment on a specific policy or procedure is required.</p>

¹ For the purposes of this policy, “policy and procedures” include those NSW Police Force policies, standard operating procedures, codes of best practice or guidelines which have been corporately endorsed and adopted on a state-wide or regional basis.

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST	AUTHORITY	COMMENT
15. Routine police operations or investigations	<p>Officer in charge of the operation or investigation (namely Duty Officer, Investigations Manager, Crime Manager); or Relevant Local Area Commander/ specialist equivalent or their appointed delegate.</p>	<p>Routine police operations or investigations include deployment of resources and tactics used for operations under the direct command of that officer. See section 3.1.3.</p> <p>If the issue has implications for other commands, then the approval of the relevant senior commander must be obtained and inform the Media Unit before commenting.</p>
16. Security and Counter Terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner • Deputy Commissioners • Asst Commissioner, Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics; or • officers specifically delegated by one of the above. 	<p>Any requests for comment received by officers other than those listed must be referred to the Police Media Unit.</p>

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST

AUTHORITY

COMMENT

17. Sieges

Commanding Officer in consultation with Police Media Unit.

Advise the Police Media Unit at the earliest opportunity of a siege situation so that a media strategy can be developed (see section 2.2).

Request the attendance of a Police Spokesperson or Media Liaison Officer to manage media at the scene.

Until the arrival of a Media Unit representative, the Commander at the scene must set aside a safe media assembly area which is not in sight of the POI and which will not interfere with the integrity of police action or restrict access to the scene.

Exercise care when making any public comment as the POI may have access to TV/radio. Media may be briefed on the basic nature of the situation, but information and access will be entirely at the discretion of the operational commander and senior police negotiator.

Media must also be warned of the dangers that their reporting could have on the outcome.

Unless authorised by the operational commander and senior police negotiator, the media must not be briefed about:

- Police strategies
- Demands of the POI

OPERATIONAL AREA OF INTEREST	AUTHORITY	COMMENT
<p>18. State Crime Command squads:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex Crimes • Drug Squad • Firearms & Regulated Industries • Gangs • Homicide • Property Crime • Robbery & Serious Crime • Fraud • Asian Crime • Middle Eastern Organised Crime • Special Task Force • Strike Force 	<p>Officer specifically authorised to speak on State Crime Command matters.</p> <p>For major incidents or where a Strike Force is formed, the Police Media Unit will develop a media and communications strategy in conjunction with the Squad or Strike Force Commander and the Director, Serious or Organised Crime, State Crime Command (see Sections 10 and 2.2 for details).</p>	<p>Any media enquiries dealing with areas within the State Crime Command must be referred to the State Crime Command Media Liaison Officer - EN: 28339, 8835 8339 or 0425 214 090.</p>
<p>19. State Disaster Plan</p>	<p>Director, Public Affairs Branch</p>	<p>The Director, Public Affairs Branch, acts in his/her capacity as Public Information Co-ordinator under the DISPLAN.</p>

