



Schizy Incorporated
schizy.org

Schizy Inc statement on responsible media and schizophrenia.

Schizy Incorporated (Schizy Inc) is a collective of people with schizophrenia and similar mental health realities, advocating access and respectful inclusion through the arts. Based in Melbourne, members and contributing artists live all round Australia, with a strong international collaboration of disabled artists and allies. Schizy Inc is fully managed by people with lived experience, consistently producing innovative excellence in the arts. Schizy Inc is proud of a strong and proven positive social impact ethos.

In line with 21st century global disability social and human rights, we believe it's no longer acceptable for any disability, including mental illness, to be seen as a social, medical, forensic or economic burden. Yet some journalists, politicians, health experts and public profile agencies, continue to associate serious criminal activity and violence with a mental health diagnosis, portraying our normal health reality as a negative and fearful health condition.

On Monday 24 August 2020, a respected current affairs program aired a longform story about the relatives of people with schizophrenia committing acts of extreme violence. Over 700,000 people viewed the story as it aired, with over 600,000 people continuing to access the production through replays, social media and on-demand viewing. We respect the devastating grief of the families in the show. However Australia's most eminent psychiatrist is not the counter-voice to speak on behalf of up to 200,000 Australian residents with schizophrenia.

Contrary to apparent popular opinion about people with schizophrenia being the bedrock of issues regarding the failed mental health system, shockwaves have torn through the lived experience advocacy community around the country. People from all mental health backgrounds have rallied together in a united call to action - schizophrenia should never be presented to the public as a rationale for violent crime.

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of People with Disability *Article 8* (part 2) states Australia must:

"Encourage all organs of the media to portray persons with disabilities in a manner consistent with the purpose of the present Convention i.e Article 1, to promote respect for their inherent dignity".

Schizy Inc encourages all media-makers to:

- be up to date with UN disability rights;
- actively seek out and include notable lived experience advocates in the creation and production of any public broadcast media and arts that features disability;
- Make a public apology, or followup story, when people with lived experience of any disability have been categorically incriminated as a deficit, burden or reason for systemic failures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Heidi Everett', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Heidi Everett
Founder & Chair of Schizy Incorporated

UN Convention of the Rights of People with Disability, accessed June 2018
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>