

Breakout

News sense

| ACTIVITIES AND TRAINER NOTES | SLIDE NO. |
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| <p>Make some clear statements about the confronting nature of the material, and how students can take care of themselves. Make it clear that the classroom setting is not a therapeutic environment and is not the place to reveal sensitive personal information. Experience in the violence against women (VAW) sector tells us that people who make personal revelations in the classroom can be left feeling unsupported and exposed. Alert students to the student counselling resources available at your institution. Emphasise the need for respectful debate and argument, even when people strongly disagree. Discussion is encouraged, but respect is not negotiable</p> <p>Most classic definitions of news in the journalism text books include concepts such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impact; • newness; • being unusual; • interesting; • significant and • concerning people and directly affecting them. <p>But sometimes we miss the news. Sometimes it hides in plain sight. Sometimes it is not new, but something triggers our awareness, or makes us see the world in a fresh light, and suddenly we realise we have been missing an important story</p> <p>And that raises the question as to why our news sense has been inadequate before, and how we can improve it.</p> | 2 |
| <p>The journalists' code of ethics says journalists aspire to "describe society to itself". But some aspects of society have not been included in journalistic work, or not given enough attention, even though they fit this mission.</p> <p>(Depending on class size and time, ask student to nominate examples of this. Some might include mental illness, sexual abuse of children by religious institutions, poverty, environmental damage. Family violence is also an example, of course)</p> | 3 |

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| <p>Let's think about family violence as an example.</p> <p>It is undoubtedly a significant news story. PP 4-6 shows its impact. And if you reflect for a moment, you probably all know someone who has been affected by it. So it meets many of the criteria of news. It has impact and importance and it affects people profoundly.</p> <p>But it isn't new. Arguably, family violence is Australia's biggest health, crime and human rights story. And it has been for a long while.</p> <p>Yet until recently journalists didn't report it as a news story. Like the rest of society – including the police – they saw it largely as a private matter, instead of seeing it as a social issue.</p> <p>Admittedly it presented challenges for reporters. Family violence takes place behind closed doors. Normally even close friends and neighbours might not know it is happening, let alone journalists.</p> | 4-6 |
| <p>As the graph (generated from a Factiva search) on PP 5 shows, in 2015 there was a big spike in media reporting of family violence, and while this has declined, the levels of reporting are continuing at higher levels than previously. It is unlikely that this is because there was a significant increase in incidents – family violence is not new!</p> | 7 |
| <p>So what changed about journalists' news sense? And why?</p> <p>[Before showing PP 8 get students to nominate reasons why it changed. Possible answers include availability of sources (such as Rosie Batty); the police talking about it; impact of feminism; more openness in society generally.)</p> <p>Research shows that the factors on PP 8 all had an impact.</p> | 8 |
| <p>Thinking about news sense, and how to improve it, it's good to reflect on how journalists in the past might have done a better job in "describing society to itself" when it comes to family violence. Here are some suggestions, that apply more broadly to improving our news sense. Ask students for some others.</p> | 9 |