



# NT Police Transparency

## A Guide to the Release of Information

Last updated, February 2012

The Northern Territory Police Force is committed to being open and transparent through the proactive release of information and response to media requests.

Internal 'Media Policy' and 'Media Release Guidelines' are in place to support this commitment across the agency.

The Media Unit operates between 7am and 5pm Monday to Friday. An after-hours, Media Liaison Officer on-call roster for major incidents operates from 5pm – 10pm weekdays, and 7am – 10pm on the weekend and public holidays.

Overnight, between 10pm and 7am, the Territory wide Duty Superintendent has carriage of major incident media management including notifying the Director, Media and Corporate Communications such as in the event of a declared emergency.

The Media Policy, through the Media Unit, approves for any 'Officer In Charge' of an investigation to provide information to the media provided this does not compromise the investigation, identify alleged offenders, identify victims (unless permission is granted and the victim(s) is over the age of 18) or disclose police tactics.

Police may release identifying information of persons they are unable to locate by other means, who are believed to have information which will assist with a serious investigation and whereby public safety is a justified concern. This may be subject to legal advice based on individual circumstances.

The Media Release Guidelines ensure the following matters are proactively considered for public release:

*If information falls within one or more of the following categories, it should be considered for public release:*

- *Timely, significant events of likely public interest;*
- *Requirement for public assistance or witnesses where members in charge believe there is a real likelihood media can assist with this part of their investigation;*
- *Serious incidents such as robbery, serious assault, fatal motor vehicle crashes;*
- *Proactive, positive PFES stories of likely public interest;*
- *Strategic priorities with key educational messages such as road safety – drink drivers caught;*
- *Significant arrests, charges and court dates; and*
- *Public safety concerns.*

The Media Unit will endeavour to provide a response to all requests for information from media. Such responses may be limited to an explanation of why further information cannot be disclosed at the time of the request itself.

## **Release of Information Regarding Internal Investigations and Disciplinary Matters**

The Ethical and Professional Standards Command investigates and oversees any matters brought to its attention which involve Police (including off-duty Officers).

Such investigations might follow one or a combination of the following:

- A complaint from the public or other non police person or organisation;
- Alleged internal disciplinary issue such as a breach of policy;
- Alleged criminal issue subject to an NT Police investigation such as drink driving or fraud;
- Alleged criminal issue subject to an investigation by a non NT Police authority such as a different jurisdiction police force, Australian Government Department or overseas investigative authority; and
- Internal disciplinary action following a Court conviction.

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Media Policy and Media Release Guidelines, allegations of police misconduct will primarily be investigated by the Ethical and Professional Standards Command. This includes a process of interviewing the individual or individuals to which the allegations are against and those who brought the allegation forward.

In the interests of natural justice, receipt of allegations and complaints alone prior to any preliminary investigation being completed will not be released to the public unless there is an immediate concern for public safety.

At the stage of an internal investigation whereby a determination is made that there is likely a serious disciplinary and/or criminal offence committed, this information will be communicated to the public via media release and posted on the PFES 'media centre' website page.

In the event that charges are laid and subsequent disciplinary action taken (if any), this information will be communicated to the public via media release and posted on the PFES 'media centre' website page.

Although the alleged offender will be identified as a Police Officer in any media release, identifying or potentially identifying details will be restricted. In the event the Officer faces Court, this information would generally be available at that stage.

In the event that an investigation is underway by a different department or agency involving an NT Police Officer and this investigation is brought to the attention of NT Police, the release of information by NT Police will be subject to a clearance/approval process of the investigating agency as the investigation will take precedence over NT Police transparency guidelines.

**Any questions, concerns or suggested changes to any of the above information should be provided to the Director, Media and Corporate Communications in the first instance on (08)8985 8805.**