

How to guide

Telling ethical stories @ FYA

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Purpose

At FYA we tell and share stories to win hearts, change minds, encourage action and empower young people creating change. In doing this, we exercise significant power because stories can persuade, influence, motivate and educate - but they can also reinforce assumptions, silence communities through poor framing, and alienate those we're seeking to back.

We have a responsibility to protect story subjects, communicate truthfully with audiences, and ensure we accurately describe the nature, scope and impact of FYA's work.

FYA's Ethical Storytelling framework has been designed to hold us to account for the way we select, collect, create and share stories. Informed by [Ethical Storytelling](#), key member organisations including [Our Climate Voices](#), [MobLab](#), as well as the [Victorian Law Foundation](#) and FYA's organisational values, this is a living framework and will be evolved as we learn from the story subjects we partner with.

FYA's principles of ethical storytelling

These principals guide FYA's approach to the way we curate, create and publish stories at FYA.

We prioritise and centre the person whose story is being told. *The best interests of the story subject are prioritised over any other consideration including advocacy for an issue, or securing funding.*

We partner with people with lived experience to select, and produce the stories. *At every stage of story development and publication we engage in meaningful collaboration with videographers, photographers and creatives who share the lived experience of the story subject. We recognise that they know the nuances and intricacies of the story better than we ever can, and back their lead in creating stories.*

We honor informed, enthusiastic consent as an ongoing process. *Prioritise the respect, privacy and safety of our story subjects by engaging in an ongoing dialogue including details on goals, methods and distribution intentions of telling their stories.*

We shape stories that maintain our story subject's dignity and humanity. *We prioritise accuracy and respect how story subjects want their story told over the desired reaction of the audience. Story subjects are empowered, capable people: survivors and advocates.*

We share stories to educate, connect, share impact and encourage action. *We avoid over-dramatisation, stereotyping or simplifying - interviews, images and film are authentic to the individual or community, their context and story.*

We are never the hero or saviour. *Young people's success or potential is not made possible by or enhanced by FYA or our funders. We are partners with young people, who support them to create the change they envision.*

Selecting, curating + creating stories

How to conduct interviews at FYA

Outlined below are a few key things for FYA staff to consider before, during and after collecting an interview or creating content. These guidelines have been informed by the [Dart Center Guide for Trauma Informed Journalism](#), [Witness](#), and other sources.

Before

- Do seek input on whose stories to tell and how from the youth led organisations and movements we're working with - not just those we have the strongest relationships with or who are easiest to connect with.
- Do ensure you have discussed the purpose, intended audience and use of the content with the individual or community you're interviewing.
- Do ask what the individual or community wants out of the interview.
- Do ensure you have the freely given informed consent from all participants prior to commencing recording, filming, interviewing, publishing or sharing their content. Consent forms are included [here](#).
- Do check if they'd like to have a support person or friend present during the interview (requirement for under 15s require parental, guardian or caregiver permission at minimum).
- Do acknowledge and appreciate the individual's willingness to participate in the interview - ensure they know you value them sharing something personal.
- Do ensure that someone with lived experience of the issue of topic is involved in the selection of stories, development of questions and final version of the story.
- Do test the questions on yourself. Can you answer it? Is the answer interesting or boring? Is the answer personal or theoretical? (Adjust and eliminate questions based on your responses).

During

- **Do** regularly check in on how they are faring during the interview, provide words of encouragement but also remind them that they can stop or take a break at any time.
- **Do** ease into the process - don't start with the hardest, most personal question first. Get to know your interviewee and help them to be comfortable / relax.
- **Do** pay attention to where and how an interview is taking place. Ensure that the story subject is comfortable, and able to tell their story without outside pressure.
- **Don't** ask questions that would unnecessarily reactivate pain or grief of the interviewee without gaining their interviewee's consent prior.

- **Do** give prior consideration to how questions are asked and framed, as well as what post interview support may be required due to the nature of the interview topic.
- **Do** ensure that the interviewee feels heard, cared for and supported as you end the interview.

After

- **Do** check in with the individual about how the experience was for them, logistically and emotionally. If they have feedback, accept it without ego and thank them for sharing it.
- **Do** pay attention to their wellbeing, and check whether they're seeing friends or loved ones following the interview or session. FYA staff can reach out to the Wellbeings team for advice on specific support that is available and may be appropriate.
- **Do** recommend that they read [this](#) or another relevant resource i.e. about the impact of negative media before sharing their content online.
- **Do** say thank you! It goes a long way to making someone feel appreciated and acknowledged for what they've done.
- **Don't** publish a story without sending the content to the story subject for review first.

Remuneration

FYA ensures all story subjects (communities or individuals) are remunerated for their images, stories, time and input when we're utilising this for branded communications that promotes or supports FYA's work from social media content to grant applications and annual reports. We would pay individuals regardless of whether we decide to publish content or not.

The exception to this is marketing or recruitment materials collected as part of our programs and initiatives, which we would seek consent from participants at the commencement of the program to capture, use and publish their imagery. Imagery that features young people in 'hero' shots or contain direct quotes would be shared for their review and approval prior to publication.

For stories: Unless otherwise negotiated with the individual or organisation, FYA pays contributors \$350 per story or \$100 per interview. To ensure that all contributors retain ownership and creative control of their content, we ask them to sign a contributor agreement.

For images / video participation: Unless otherwise negotiated with the individual or organisation, FYA pays \$50.00 per hour for photography or videography.

Publishing, sharing + storing stories

Accessibility

Accessible Language

We use the following guidelines to help create clear and understandable written content:

- **Choose easy and short words, not formal, long ones:** we write for the reading comprehension of a nine year old to help content reach the most users.
- **Explain concepts and ideas rather than using jargon:** buzzwords and jargon are usually too vague, open to interpretation and in some cases meaningless. Instead think about what the term actually means and describe that. If you're stuck on key terms we use at FYA, check out the narrative guide.
- **Write conversationally, in first person, using the active voice:** write as if you were talking directly to your audience, with the authority of someone who can help and inform.
- **Test your content with users:** what's clear to you isn't always clear for someone else. Get a sense check, and update where possible based on their feedback.

Inclusive and Respectful Language

We respect and listen to how people identify when it comes to how they're referred, rather than making assumptions.

There are many existing guidelines and information publicly available to ensure we are using inclusive and respectful language, including:

- [People With Disability Australia's Language Guide](#)
- [Reconciliation Australia's Language Guide](#)
- [How to be a non-binary ally](#)

Imagery / Video

- **Captions / Transcripts**

We provide [closed caption](#) subtitles for all video content we produce / host on our channels. These captions are created by FYA or a third party organisation who use human generated captions to ensure accuracy and completeness.

Tips for writing captions for video or audio content:

- Use first-person, direct speech.
- Don't summarise what people are saying to fit better on screen or edit down the quote in any significant way.

We provide full [transcripts](#) for video content for training or workshops where a detailed understanding of the materials is useful or necessary.

If you need live captioning / transcripts for an event it is recommended that depending on the participants requirements, to use a human generated caption service such as [AI Media](#).

- **Alt text (image descriptions)**

We use alt text or alternative text for any digital images . Tips for writing image descriptions:

- The description should accurately reflect the content or function of the image.
- If the image contains text, replicate that text in the description.
- If the image has been used as a link, describe the link destination in the description.
- If the image serves a purely decorative purpose, it could be described as “decorative” or have a null alt (a null alt looks like this in HTML: “”, which is a cue for screen readers and other assistive technologies to ignore it).

Presentations / Training

When delivering training and presentations it is important to consider the following:

- **Ask participants to register access needs ahead of time** - whether internal or external, highlight what access considerations have already been included and invite participants to include other specific requests.
- **Speaking pace and clarity** - if your session requires an Auslan interpreter be sure to outline this for both presenters and participants so they are aware that they need to speak slowly and clearly.
- **Energy** - ensure to provide breaks every hour for at least 10 minutes or as required for participants, especially when on zoom.
- **Layout / design** - keeping slides simple, brief and being mindful of colours / fonts sizes / image use is key. Our brand colour palette has been tested for colour contrast, but it is ideal to check with your audience regardless. Avoid animations as they can be distracting and / or make some people unwell.
- **Cover all displayed text** - speak to all the visual information you present, and where required described pertinent parts of graphics, images and/or videos.
- **Describe other visual information** - For example, a speaker asks people to raise their hands if they make their websites fully accessible. The speaker should then describe the visual response: “About half raised their hand”.

- **Sending preparation materials** - this means sharing all questions, explanations and agendas well in advance of the session / meeting to allow participants as well as any / all interpreters or captioners attending.
- **Providing multiple ways to communicate and/or interact** - whether in person or on zoom ensure that you are placing equal emphasis on contributions through chat or other means as you are in camera / aloud.
- **Consider activities** - remember potential access issues with any activities including responding to questions, arranging sticky notes, physical movement.

Credits

Images reproduced by FYA in any communications should be appropriately credited, wherever possible.

Our style is either:

- Photo: Shona McPherson
- Photos: Shona McPherson/FYA

If the photo has been supplied by a third party, we either:

- Use the credit as supplied by the third party;
- Used with permission of the author / copyright owner or
- Credit as: "Photo supplied by XXXX."

Third Parties

All communications in which FYA uses content which we have not gathered, commissioned or created ourselves must still reflect our values, and Ethical Storytelling Guidelines.

This applies to all content from third parties, including content which has been:

- purchased from a supplier (such as a wire service, photo agency, stock library or photographer); or
- provided by the public or supporters.

Do not use content from third parties if you are not absolutely certain that:

- it complies with these Ethical Storytelling guidelines;
- we hold the copyright or appropriate licence or permission to use the image;
- we have received written permission from the copyright holder or agency to use the image; or
- the image or content has a Creative Commons license or usage permission attached to it.

Digital moderation

At FYA, we use social media as a key distribution channel for storytelling, to continue engaging existing audiences and grow new audiences. We moderate content daily, checking channels for new comments in the morning and afternoon of every day.

Moderation involves reviewing comments on our posts and other user-generated content (UGC) and determining whether to hide, delete, ban or block the content and/or user, and assess whether it is appropriate and valuable to engage with the online community. How we moderate is informed by our [community guidelines](#).

Moderation also includes communicating with people affected by suicidal thoughts, feelings or behaviour. We always take any content that suggests a person may be thinking about self harm or suicide seriously, but are also sure to set boundaries about the type of support we are able to offer and when we are able to offer it. Please see and use our standard responses for digital moderation [here](#).

Editing

We always maintain the meaning, emotion, context and authenticity of what an individual expresses in a quote or comment.

We edit content when the meaning is unclear, or the quote is too long, and seek approval from the story subject for these changes prior to publishing.

When editing or omitting parts of a quote, FYA does not change the meaning, accuracy, intent or integrity of what the speaker is saying or take the quote out of context.

Longevity, storage + archiving

When selecting an image or story to use, always check the date and purpose for which it was collected and ensure the appropriate level of consent has been provided before using.

Prior to saving / storing content on the drive staff should consult our privacy policy. It is important when saving to include the date the information was collected, and the purposes for which it was collected.

FYA stores all imagery, videos, interview transcripts and written content on our shared Google Drive. An edited selection will be available in the brand library, until archived or made confidential (upon request eg. the person requests we remove or edit the personal information we hold about them in line with our Privacy Policy, or if consent is withdrawn or the context of the story subject has changed i.e. a young person in photos has passed away and their family request it be removed).

After five years of use, images that closely feature the image or personal story of a specific individual should be checked and where required consent renewed. Group or activity content from our programs or projects can be kept for ongoing use to

demonstrate FYA's work in action in order to record and show our organisational journey.

Sharing and/or reproducing content of private versus public figures

The status of our story subject(s) - whether they are a private figure (someone who hasn't sought out the public spotlight in a professional capacity) or a public figure (i.e. politician, celebrity, social or business leader) - is essential to understanding the context in which their stories should and shouldn't be shared and/or reproduced.

Private figures

We only share the personal stories of private figures (individuals and/or communities) in the way they have either produced or approved, with full credit, and only in the context it was produced.

We do not share or reproduce a private individual's or community's stories in a different context without their informed consent.

Public figures

We can generally share stories produced in the public domain and reproduce the stories through different content (i.e. taking a quote from a media article and turning it into a graphic square). For example, if Greta Thunberg shares an exceptional quote about Climate Change, we can share this in a presentation, crediting the speaker, and highlighting the context this was shared in provided that it abides by copyright regulations / we've paid for licensing where necessary).

We maintain these stories in the context they were originally produced and give full credit to the individual or community.

Trigger warnings and/or cultural sensitivity warnings

A content warning is a consent button for content - a statement shared at the start of a presentation, story, social media post, display or demonstration to alert users of any distressing content. Content warnings can help audiences make an informed decision about whether or not they continue to read or engage with the content.

At FYA, we provide prior warning for both internal and external content, including:

- **Trigger warnings** to prevent exposing someone to content that may cause them to relive a distressing or traumatic experience e.g. violence, sexual violence, self-harm, discrimination, image or appearance dysphoria.
- **Cultural sensitivity warnings** to notify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that the content may cause sadness, distress and/or offense against cultural protocols.

Where we are delivering sensitive / distressing content we should aim to:

- Provide a trigger warning in advance of presentation, story, social media post, display or demonstration, so that people can react to the

warning privately, have time to make decisions and self-care arrangements;

- Reiterate this warning at the start of the event or presentation containing the material;
- Ensure that content / materials are structured in a way that people don't have to miss an entire event / presentation i.e. tell people when the triggering information will occur and when they might feel comfortable to re-enter the event or session;
- provide an emphatic reminder that people may leave any activity at time; and
- coupled with opt-out opportunities i.e. creating a space like a quiet room for people not to be present during upsetting material.

Having a warning delivered at the last moment is very difficult because:

- people may be distressed by the sudden need to switch to self-preservation mode;
- people may be unable to escape from the triggering situation due to, eg, being seated in the middle of a row; and
- people may have a negative reaction to the warning in the moment that they didn't want to experience in a room full of people.

How to put a content warning together:

- **Social media:** When posting an image, video or story on social media, start your description with the warning type ("TW:" or "CW;") and then add keywords. [Orygen](#) has some great templates for Instagram in particular. Where appropriate, share resources where the audience can seek support (see [digital moderation guide](#) for suggestions).
- **Articles / blog posts / media releases / submissions:** Include the warning at the start of the article ("Trigger Warning" or "Content Warning"), and then add a short description of the themes which may be difficult to read or triggering to some readers. Share appropriate support resources with contact details for readers to use as needed.
- **Events / presentations:** Include a content or trigger warning in the event invitation if possible, via email ahead of a presentation or as a last resort provide a message before attendees enter the venue if it is a last minute change or addition. Reiterate at the start of the conversation that you are giving a content warning, clearly mention the themes you will be touching on, and provide enough time for people to discreetly opt out.

Please contact FYA Communications Lead, Shona McPherson at 0410 293 844 or shona.mcpherson@fya.org.au for more information or advice.