

# Yearbook 2025



## Thank you to our partners

None of what we do would be possible without the tremendous support from our many partners who believe in the value of journalism. Underpinning this is the contribution from media organisations which come together collaboratively to support the Walkley Foundation.

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PROUD SUPPORTER OF THE WALKLEY AWARDS FOR 70 YEARS

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Cover photo: Carly Earl, *Guardian Australia*, 'Riley on the Roma Southern Road'



Winners at the 2024 Walkley Awards. PHOTO: ADAM HOLLINGWORTH

## About us

The Walkley Foundation supports a robust, fair and diverse Australian media that strengthens and sustains our democracy. We are the custodians of excellence in reporting in our nation, working independently and collaboratively with all media organisations to encourage ethical, best-practice journalism.

The impact of the Walkley Foundation is felt in every corner of the media industry and wider community. We champion the role of journalism in society by promoting awareness of the craft, raising the profile of journalists and their work, and recognising the achievements of our peers.

We work with industry partners to support professional development and increase opportunities for training and networking. These efforts are aimed at safeguarding the role of journalism in the present and sustaining this vital work into the future.

### Encouraging excellence

- The Walkley Awards
- John B Fairfax Family Young Australian Journalist of the Year Awards
- Mid-Year Media Prizes
- Partner Awards

### Professional development

- Scholarships and fellowships
- Training and webinars
- Leadership
- Mentoring

### Supporting and valuing journalism

- Sean Dorney Grant for Pacific Journalism
- Solutions Journalism Grants



**4,700**  
NEWSLETTER  
SUBSCRIBERS



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TWITTER  
FOLLOWERS



**6.6k**  
FACEBOOK  
FOLLOWERS



**3.2k**  
INSTAGRAM  
FOLLOWERS



**3.7k**  
LINKEDIN  
FOLLOWERS



**5.4k**  
MEDIUM  
FOLLOWERS

## Independence and good governance

The Walkley Foundation is an independently funded company limited by guarantee and registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission. The Walkley Awards belong to journalists and the industry, and we work independently and collaboratively with all media. Support from media organisations, in the form of financial support or in-kind contributions, is critical to our success.

### Walkley directors

The Walkley Foundation's board consists of six senior journalists.



Chair: Adele Ferguson, ABC, non-executive director



Bianca Hall, *The Age*, MEAA Vice President



Victoria Laurie, freelance writer, independent director



Sally Neighbour, chair of the Walkley Judging Board



Michael Slezak, ABC, MEAA Federal President



Kasun Ubayasiri, Griffith University, MEAA Vice President

### Walkley Public Fund committee



Chair: Pamela Williams, author



Paul Bailey, former editor, *The Australian Financial Review*



Dan Bouchier, NITV/SBS



Kate Haddock, Banki Haddock Flora



Kate Julius, PwC



Alan Sunderland, journalist and author

# Walkley Judging Board

The Walkley directors appoint the Walkley Judging Board. This is an advisory committee composed of senior media industry members who judge the Walkley Award winners, advise the directors on matters relating to the awards, and act as ambassadors for the Walkley Foundation.



Chair: Sally Neighbour



Christine Ahern, Nine



Gay Alcorn, *Good Weekend Magazine, The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age*



Tom Dusevic, *The Australian*



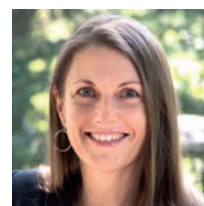
Karla Grant, SBS/NITV (abstained from 2025 judging)



Richard Guillatt, freelance



Rashell Habib, Ten/Paramount



Saffron Howden, freelance, formerly ACM



Gabrielle Jackson, *Guardian Australia*



Julie Lewis, *The Sydney Morning Herald*



Claire Mackay, ABC South Australia



Greg Muller, LISTNR



Melanie Petrinc, *The Courier-Mail*



Jake Nowakowski, *Herald Sun* (abstained from 2025 judging)



Mark Riley, Seven News



Paul Williams, SBS

## Working together

Thank you to the many senior journalists who gave their time to judge the Walkley Awards this year.

Amelia Adams, Nine  
Drew Ambrose, *Al Jazeera English*  
Mike Amor, Seven  
Monica Attard, UTS  
Kathy Bail, UNSW Press Ltd  
Paul Bailey, former editor, *AFR*  
Anne Barker, ABC  
Caroline Baum, freelance  
Greg Baum, formerly *The Age*  
Bruce Belsham, freelance, formerly ABC  
Gareth Boreham, SBS  
Amelia Brace, *Ten News First*  
Peter Broelman, *The Advertiser*  
Adam Carey, *The Age*  
Patrick Carlyon, *Herald Sun*  
Antony Cirocco, freelance  
Natalie Clancy, Nine  
Hagar Cohen, ABC  
Amanda Collinge, ABC  
Matt Condon, *The Australian*  
Sean Cowan, *Business News*  
Simon Crerar, *Impact&ble*  
Lisa Davies, former editor, *SMH*  
Thea Dikeos, ABC  
John Ferguson, *The Australian*  
Michael Green, freelance  
Sarah Greenhalgh, Seven  
Ross Greenwood, *Sky News*  
Micaela Hambrett, ABC  
David Hardaker, freelance

Sandra Jackson, Seven West Media  
Susie Jones, ABC  
Ruby Jones, Solstice Media  
Liz Keen, Headline Productions  
Melanie Kembrey, *SMH*  
Daniel King, First Person Films  
Tony Koch, freelance  
Michael Koslowski, Studio Bucket  
Laetitia Lemke, ABC  
Connie Levett, freelance  
Chris Lewis, ABC  
Rosie Lewis, *The Australian*  
Miles Martignoni, *Guardian Australia*  
Matthew Martin, freelance  
Sarah Matray, *Herald Sun*  
Rudi Maxwell, ABC  
Margie McLew, Nine  
Ian McPhedran, formerly News Corp  
Rosemarie Milsom, Newcastle Writers Festival  
Nel Minchin, Easy Tiger Productions  
Kate Montague, Audiocraft  
Blythe Moore, ABC  
Alexis Moran, SBS/NITV  
Catherine Naylor, *SMH*  
Kirsty Needham, Reuters  
Bianca Nogrady, freelance  
Brad Norington, *The Australian*  
Natalie O'Brien, freelance  
Stephen Oliver, ABC  
Gregg Porteous, freelance

Jo Puccini, ABC  
Chris Reason, Seven Network  
Deb Richards, freelance  
Kellie Riordan, Deadset Studios  
Stephen Romei, *The Australian*  
Olivia Rosenman, UTS  
Colleen Ryan, former editor, *AFR*  
Rosanna Ryan, *Brisbane Times*  
Paul Scambler, *The Examiner*, ACM  
Tory Shepherd, *Guardian Australia*  
Alissa Smith, Seven  
Danielle Smith, *SMH*  
Sue Spencer, freelance  
Svetlana Stankovic, *Guardian Australia*  
Nina Stevens, *Ten News First*  
Katrina Strickland, *SMH*  
Edmund Tadros, *AFR*  
Brian Thomson, freelance, formerly SBS  
Gayle Tomlinson, *The Pulse Illawarra*  
Cam Tyeson, *10 News*  
John Van Tiggelen, freelance  
Steve Waterson, *The Australian*  
Richard Welch, AFTRS  
Danny Wheeler, Sky News  
Hugh Whitfeld, Seven  
Ashleigh Wilson, Sydney Opera House  
Tony Wright, *The Age*  
Integrity observers: Sarah Curnow, Narelle Hooper, Fenella Souter

## Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

You can help the Walkley Public Fund provide professional development training now. Make a difference.  
Go to [www.walkleys.co/donate](http://www.walkleys.co/donate)



## Celebrating 70 years

The world has evolved, but the Walkley Awards remain the benchmark for excellence, writes CEO **Shona Martyn**.

**T**his year we are celebrating the 70th Walkley Awards, Australia's premier awards for excellence in journalism, which were first presented in 1956 — coincidentally the year that television was introduced in Australia. It's clear that methods of reporting and consuming the news have changed markedly since then, but the aim of recognising the country's best journalism remains in the digital age. Excellence is still our mission.

The founder of the Walkley Awards, Sir William Gaston Walkley, initiated an Australian version of the US's Pulitzer Prizes after spending time with reporters who were covering his search for oil off Western Australia in 1953. A keen supporter of the media, he believed that the awards would maintain and improve journalistic standards. His offer of financial support was welcomed by the Australian Journalists Association, the forerunner of the Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance.

In 1956 there were just five award categories: best news story, best newspaper feature, best magazine feature, best photograph and best provincial newspaper story. The first award for best news story went to Eva Sommer, a cadet reporter for the *Sydney Sun*, whose front-page scoop about a stateless and amnesiac stowaway revealed he was Jacob Bresler, a survivor of the Buchenwald concentration camp. The first winner of the best photograph was Murray Wilmott of the *Daily Mirror* for a moving Anzac Day picture.

Today's Walkley Awards have more than 30 categories, and welcome entries published on platforms such as TikTok and in formats such as podcasts and explainers. Categories are reviewed every five years to ensure they recognise the media world of today. Each year, more than 1000 entries are received from individuals and teams. Without doubt, the Walkleys have proven to be the equal of the Pulitzers.

In 2025, the Walkley Foundation has continued to honour excellence in Australian journalism through its awards, fellowships and grants programs. A well-received initiative this year was the Masters & McKenzie Investigative Journalism Fellowship, funded by a philanthropic donation through the Australian Communities Foundation. Seven mid-career journalists took part in an intensive weekend program, learning first-hand from some of Australia's best investigative journalists and legal specialists.

In March, the Walkley Foundation announced that 11 journalists and small news organisations would share \$180,000 in grants from the Solutions Journalism Fund,



Shona Martyn at the 2024 Walkley Awards. PHOTO: MONIQUE HARMER

while nine journalists were chosen to take part in the Walkley Mentorship Program. The Sean Dorney Grant for Pacific Journalism and the Jacoby-Walkley Scholarship with Nine were joined by the new ARN Audio Scholarship. The Opportunity Scholarships with SBS and the *Newcastle Herald*, offering paid placements for young journalists from lower socio-economic backgrounds, continued for a third year.

As a not-for-profit organisation, the Walkley Foundation funds its work through the generous support of sponsors, donors and supporters. Chief among them is the John B Fairfax Family's Jibb Foundation, which supports the annual Young Journalist of the Year awards presented at the Mid-Year Media Prizes in June. This year's overall winner was April McLennan of ABC Tasmania and triple *j hack* (now with the ABC in Port Lincoln), who picked up awards for stories about unwanted medical intervention in childbirth and accusations against a former Launceston mayor, Danny Gibson.

I would like to offer my immense thanks not only to our sponsors and donors but also to the legion of journalists who serve our cause as directors, Public Fund committee members, Judging Board members and judges. I thank the many individuals who provide valuable advice and, of course, the small but mighty team at the Walkley Foundation. These contributions allow us to achieve our mission in recognising and developing journalistic excellence. •

## An important role in precarious times

Journalists stand in the way of threats to democracy and civil society, writes **Sally Neighbour**.

In 2025 we celebrate the landmark 70th year of the Walkley Awards. Back when the Walkleys were conceived — a whole human lifetime ago — in that flush of post-war optimism and prosperity, few would have foreseen the cyclonic whorl of misinformation, disinformation and weaponisation of facts that pervades our world today.

We may count ourselves lucky to live in a country where free, independent and robust news media are still — largely — respected and valued. But we cannot assume this will always hold true. Journalists now stand in the way of dangerous and unpredictable forces that threaten democracy, civil society and the rule of law, mostly abroad but also here in Australia.

And, by definition, anybody who gets in the way is vulnerable, too. Recent events overseas remind us how precarious the position of the news media is and how dangerous it can be for journalists to do their job.

In the Middle East, Africa, Central America, China, South-East Asia and elsewhere, we see journalists and publishers routinely being attacked, sued, intimidated, physically threatened, arrested, tortured and, especially in Gaza and other war zones, frequently killed.

Even in the USA, Land of the Free, we see freedom of expression and press freedom under daily assault. Here in Australia, the threats are less frequent but no less real, and growing. Acclaimed journalist and 2024 Gold Walkley winner Nick McKenzie recently had a frightening security breach at his home, clearly designed to silence him.

Here, most threats to our work are not directly about our lives or safety, but they can be prosaically effective — think of new limits to freedom of information laws, the spreading curse of non-disclosure agreements, suppression orders from our law courts, the pervasive shackle of the defamation laws.

Our media companies face enormous challenges to survive and compete with streaming services, social media, bloggers, influencers, podcasters and the like. And trust in the mainstream media is declining.

One global survey shows that only 43 per cent of Australians trust the news media most of the time. That puts Australia 17th on a list of 46 countries; above the UK and US — where the trust level has dropped to 30 per cent — but below Nigeria, South Africa and Hong Kong.

The upside is that in this world of seemingly infinite information choices, there is a real hunger for integrity,



Sally Neighbour is chair of the Walkley Judging Board.

accuracy and truth ... for news and information that is independent, brave, rigorous and genuinely trustworthy.

Producing journalism that the public can trust is the key to our survival. The Walkley Awards play a central part in that, by setting the bar that journalists in Australia strive and aspire to meet, and by rewarding integrity, independence, fearlessness and quality in what we do.

For 70 years, the Walkley Awards have been promoting, supporting, celebrating and honouring excellence in journalism in Australia. This year, we've had 1023 entries in the 30 categories. The quality represented by this year's finalists and winners is extremely high and well worth celebrating.

The task of sorting, assessing, fact checking and vetting the more than 1000 entries is an enormous enterprise undertaken with diligence and dedication by the Foundation's hard-working team, led by CEO Shona Martyn and awards manager Margie Smithurst.

More than 100 journalists volunteer their time to sit on first-round judging panels to choose three finalists in each category, a task requiring many hours of work. Our integrity observers — Narelle Hooper, Fenella Souter and Sarah Curnow — ensure that all entries chosen as finalists comply with the awards' terms and conditions and with our policies on AI use and chequebook journalism, which the Walkleys does not reward. The winners are selected by the 16-member Walkley Advisory Board, which deliberates and decides in strict confidentiality.

As chair of the Walkley Judging Board for the past two years I've been impressed and inspired by the quality of Australian journalism when it's at its best. The 2025 Walkleys showcase outstanding foreign reportage, world-class investigations, stunning photography, searing commentary and analysis, ground-breaking documentaries and heart-wrenching reporting on Indigenous affairs.

Warm congratulations to the winners and finalists. And to every one of you who entered this year's awards, thank you for championing excellence in journalism, supporting the Walkleys and being the backbone of our industry. Stay brave and proud in your work. •

## Ethics, excellence and press freedom

Journalists are the rightful defenders of a free and ethical press, writes **Michael Slezak**.

**S**eventy years ago, our union was tasked with running the very first Walkley Awards. This year, we celebrate the 70th awards run under the proud custodianship of the journalists' union.

Twenty five years ago it was again our union, the Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance, that established The Walkley Foundation — not only to oversee the awards, but also to foster a community of journalists, defend press freedom and help deliver training for members and non-members around Australia.

Our union's role as a custodian of all that is, of course, no accident. Working journalists are by necessity the rightful defenders of a free and ethical press — a press that supports excellent journalism.

Who else could it be? It can't be employers, who are too often motivated by commercial interests and political pressure. And it can't be governments, who want to hide their failings and retain their power.

And it certainly can't be self-appointed arbiters from the ivory towers of academia, who are removed from the cut and thrust of contemporary newsrooms.

In fact, press freedom is very often defended by working journalists against governments, employers and influential outsiders. And so it is the MEAA, the collective voice of Australia's journalists, that must pick up the fight for a free and ethical press that supports excellence.

That's exactly what our union has done since its inception. But that fight is more urgent now than ever before. Press freedom is under attack everywhere we look.

Nowhere is that more acute than in Gaza, where Israeli troops have been killing Palestinian journalists at an unprecedented rate. By killing the journalists, Israel has been killing journalism itself, and hiding facts about what experts say is clearly a genocide there. But nowhere is immune from attacks on the ability of journalists to do our crucial work.

In the US, President Trump's constant denigration of journalists has now translated to what Reporters Without Borders describes as the nation's "first significant and prolonged decline in press freedom in modern history".

There, journalists (including Australians) have been targeted with rubber bullets while covering protests; pressured to sign pledges to report only approved facts at the Pentagon; and lost their jobs due to politicised funding cuts to outlets



Michael Slezak is MEAA Federal President.

including Voice of America and Radio Free Europe. And we've been no stranger to attacks on press freedom in Australia either.

Our government has sought to cripple our freedom of information laws, limiting a key tool used by journalists to report on government. Far-right extremists and those with links to organised crime have assaulted, threatened and attempted to silence Australian journalists.

Employers here have caved to lobby pressure and threatened, silenced and sacked journalists for speaking the truth. As these cases demonstrate, attacks on press freedom are levelled by employers, governments and other powerful groups. And it must be defended by working journalists, as it has been.

To do that with any power, we can't act alone. We must work collectively — we need to work as a union. Through MEAA, working journalists have successfully pushed back on the government's attempt to weaken freedom of information laws.

We've shifted the dial on breaking the chill in newsrooms to speak out about the attacks on journalists in Gaza. And we've supported journalists who successfully fought attacks on press freedom by their employers.

But a free press must also act within the bounds of journalistic ethics. Recognising this, in 1944 the Australian Journalists Association (now the MEAA) wrote one of the world's first codes of ethics for journalists. MEAA's code is now recognised in newsrooms around the country as well as in courtrooms and classrooms.

With the same concern for a free and ethical press, one that can support a thriving democracy, MEAA members ran the first Walkley Awards in 1956, set up the Walkley Foundation in 2000, and have been the custodians ever since.

We do these things because we know that the job of winning and defending press freedom — and supporting journalistic excellence — is ours. And we take it on with gusto because it matters.

MEAA looks forward to continuing its custodianship of this great institution for another 70 years and beyond. •

# 70 YEARS OF THE WALKLEYS

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

On behalf of MEAA, the union for media and creative workers and proud custodian of the Walkley Foundation.

**To celebrate, give yourself a gift that protects all that we've won and fights for a better future.**

[meaa.org/join](http://meaa.org/join)



# 2025 GOLD WALKLEY

Award Partner MEAA

## Adele Ferguson and Chris Gillett

ABC, *Four Corners*, 7.30, ABC News online,  
'Childcare crisis portfolio'



The Walkley Judging Board unanimously selected Adele Ferguson and Chris Gillett's multi-month, multi-platform investigation into the systemic failures in childcare as the story of the year, awarding it the Gold Walkley. With other

colleagues, Ferguson and Gillett won three more categories: TV/Video: Current Affairs Short, TV/Video: Current Affairs Long, and All Media: Investigative Journalism. They were also finalists in the All Media: Coverage of a Major Event and Scoop of the Year.

Their stories on the multiple crises in Australia's \$20 billion childcare industry set the national agenda for 2025. Their work on this industry, which is entrusted with caring for 1.5 million Australian children, is continuing.

As a result of their reports, NSW Parliament launched an inquiry. The federal education minister, Jason Clare, introduced sweeping reforms, citing the ABC's work, and the NDIS Commission investigated, then banned, a childcare provider featured in one story. All states and territories signed new mandatory child-safety measures.

Work on the stories began in November 2024, when the journalists initiated contact and coordinated with NSW Greens MP Abigail Boyd to lodge a call for papers to force the release of thousands of previously hidden regulatory files.

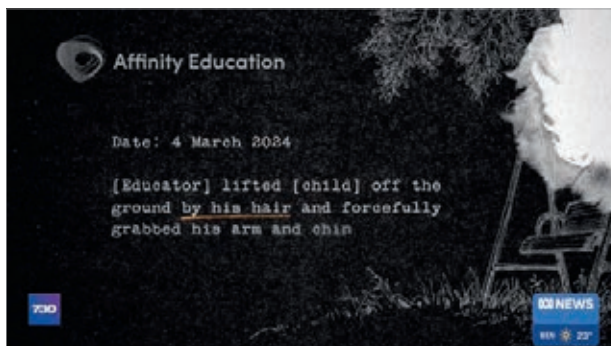
What followed was a months-long struggle for their release, but the files became central to all their investigations. The regulatory documents allowed the team to piece together the scale and pattern of systemic failure inside one of Australia's largest childcare operators, the private equity-owned Affinity Education.

*Four Corners*' 'Betrayal of trust, Australia's childcare crisis', broadcast on March 13, was the first time the sector had been dissected in such detail. A ground-up investigation exposed what had long been hidden: the impact of the rise in for-profit childcare centres, which now make up 75 per cent of the sector. This was the launch pad for a series of stories that continue today, amid calls for systemic change and growing revelations about sexual abuse of children by some childcare workers.

Adele Ferguson is a multi-award-winning investigative journalist and author with ABC Investigations. Chris Gillett is a multi-award-winning TV producer with ABC Investigations.

### JUDGES' COMMENTS

The level of research and investigation in *Four Corners*' 'Betrayal of trust, Australia's childcare crisis' and the stories that surrounded it was extraordinary. This was the outstanding investigation of the year and its impact is continuing. The 7.30 episode 'The Slap' was shocking to watch but presented in a rigorous, well-researched and impactful way, from the CCTV footage to the interviews with victims. The investigation attracted wide public interest, showing the human stories and the failure of regulators since the widespread privatisation of the childcare industry.



## PRINT/TEXT: NEWS REPORT

**Eryk Bagshaw, Bianca Hrovat, Clare Sibthorpe, *The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age and Good Food*, ‘The sinister side of the glitzy hospitality scene’**



This series of news reports forced the resignations of two of Australia’s most famous restaurateurs — Icebergs’ Maurice Terzini and Swillhouse’s Anton Forte — a SafeWork investigation into Merivale and Swillhouse, and new laws that will make sexual violence prevention training compulsory for all bar staff across NSW.

The stories were researched over months, combining the skills and contacts of investigative and rounds reporters to expose the sinister underbelly of three of Australia’s most powerful hospitality companies.

Merivale boss, billionaire Justin Hemmes, appointed Kate Eastman SC to lead an internal investigation into the allegations of sexual assault and exploitation. In June, Fair Work announced it was investigating Merivale. Terzini was forced out of Icebergs Dining Room after allegations he had protected his son Sylvester by moving him between his restaurants while he faced multiple allegations of sexual assault. Five Swillhouse whistleblowers are now pursuing Swillhouse for damages.

Eryk Bagshaw is an investigative reporter for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*. Bianca Hrovat is *Good Food*’s Sydney restaurant editor. Clare Sibthorpe is a crime reporter for *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

### JUDGES’ COMMENTS

This investigation triggered an industry-wide reckoning. The painstaking research and gripping storytelling had real impact: resignations, further scrutiny from investors and regulators, and laws to make sexual-violence prevention training compulsory.



MinterEllison is proud to support the Print / Text News Report Award. Congratulations to this year’s winner:

Eryk Bagshaw, Bianca Hrovat, Clare Sibthorpe, *The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age and Good Food*

**Real stories seen**

MinterEllison

# FEATURE WRITING SHORT (under 4000 words)

Award Partner *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*

**Melissa Fyfe**, *Good Weekend Magazine*, *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, ‘Wedlocked’



Through compelling and detail-rich storytelling, this feature makes tangible the opaque and hidden crime of forced marriage. It was three years in the making, sparked by the tragic 2020 murder of Ruqia Haidari, a forced-marriage victim.

Melissa Fyfe followed the case in court then spent months trying to get permission to enter a forced-marriage safe house in suburban Melbourne. The stakes were extremely high: these women were still in fear of their parents or husbands; one genuinely believed that if her family found out where she was living in Melbourne she would become the victim of an honour killing. The reporting entailed striking a delicate balance between telling these women’s stories without identifying them and conveying, as powerfully as possible, their unenviable predicament.

Fyfe’s research (and slow building of trust) was paired with a storytelling technique that deliberately drove momentum via one woman’s story. It was peppered with telling details that brought it alive for the reader.

Melissa Fyfe is a senior writer for *Good Weekend Magazine*. She is an award-winning feature and profile writer, former member of *The Age* investigative team and a former senior editor. She has covered state and federal politics, environment and health rounds.

### JUDGES’ COMMENTS

Forced marriage has been illegal in Australia since 2013 but the Australian Federal Police’s first successful prosecution occurred only last year — in part because the groom killed the bride then turned himself in. In this nuanced and empathetic feature, Melissa Fyfe talks to runaway brides, their helpers, and experts in the field, and asks whether the criminal justice system’s victim-perpetrator binary is too blunt an instrument for dealing with such a complex cultural practice.



**The Sydney Morning Herald**  
INDEPENDENT. ALWAYS.

**THE AGE**  
INDEPENDENT. ALWAYS.

**Celebrating reason, integrity  
and courage in journalism**

**Congratulations to all 2025 Walkley Award winners and finalists.**

*We are proud to sponsor this year’s Walkley Awards for Feature Writing Short and Scoop of the Year.*

# FEATURE WRITING LONG (over 4000 words)

## Primrose Riordan, Lisa Murray, *The Australian Financial Review*, 'The power of one: Inside Forrest's Fortescue'



This investigative feature captured one of Australia's most complex entrepreneurs, Andrew Forrest, and his attempt to remake his iron ore company into a clean energy giant.

This six-month effort sought to answer big questions. Why did his ambitious push into hydrogen end in failure? Why is his company Fortescue run so chaotically? How did Fortescue attract some of the biggest talent in the country but then, just as quickly, expel them or push them to leave? How has Forrest avoided consequences for questionable conduct?

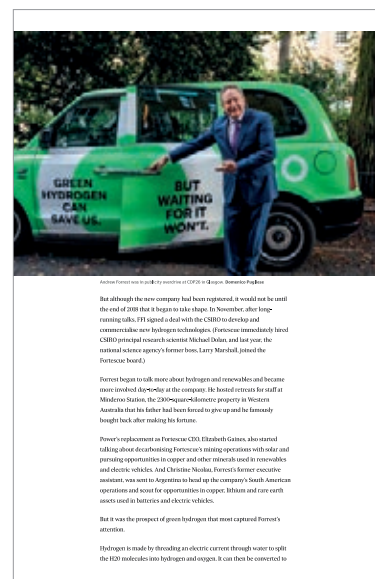
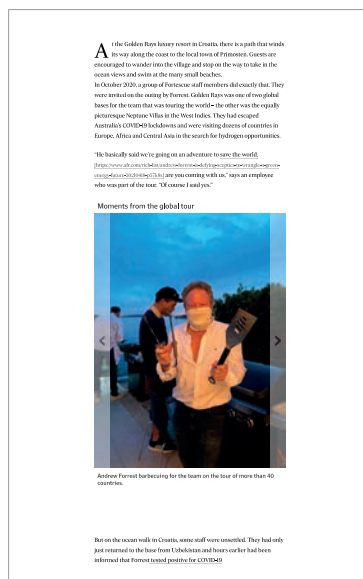
The feature cast a wide net over many months. The reporters spoke to 23 former executives and multiple mining and energy analysts, and trawled court documents and leaked internal reports, while navigating legal threats and aggressive interference attempts from public relations teams. Their tenacious efforts eventually forced Forrest to give them an interview.

It revealed how serious issues and questionable business practices, as well as Forrest's management style, contributed to the constant executive departures. It also showed how Forrest's push into hydrogen fell apart due to a failure to listen to internal warnings about the fuel's capabilities.

Primrose Riordan, an associate editor at the *AFR*, covers the private interests of the country's billionaires. Previously a China correspondent, she has won multiple awards. Lisa Murray, a previous Walkley winner, is the *AFR*'s enterprise journalism editor, steering the paper's longform efforts. She also hosts *The Fin* podcast.

### JUDGES' COMMENTS

'The power of one: Inside Forrest's Fortescue' strips away the veneer of a tycoon's green energy dream to expose the paranoia, chaos and contradictions of a misguided venture. A revealing glimpse into the chaotic world of 'Twiggy' Forrest, one of Australia's richest men, in a way never seen before. Drawing on many sources over many months, the story deftly explores behaviours and themes that belong in a Shakespearean drama.



# COMMENTARY, ANALYSIS, OPINION AND CRITIQUE

Award Partner ThomsonGeer Lawyers

**The Media Watch team, ABC, Media Watch, 'Nine's beach house porkies', 'ABC Radio chairbound', 'Conflict class'**



The Media Watch team began 2025 with a take-down of Nine's *Find My Beach House*, revealing the show featured not house hunters but house owners who, perhaps in the hope of pumping up the value of their beachside properties, had been hamming it up for the cameras. It quoted one producer who said the entire genre was riddled with such fraud. Disclaimers soon began appearing across a range of similar programs.

In April, the show investigated allegations that ABC chairman Kim Williams had repeatedly meddled in the ABC's radio division in favour of an old acquaintance, comedian Austen Tayshus, after several local ABC radio stations declined to promote his regional tour. The chairman issued an apology and the new ABC managing director, Hugh Marks, pledged to improve governance, declaring the program's revelations "important".

In June, the program analysed the duchessing of journalists by international defence giants. It examined a multibillion-dollar ship-building contract where weapons companies from Japan, Germany and Spain had showered overseas junkets on local journalists. An ABC reporter had kept secret his five-star trip to Europe from one defence company. The veteran defence correspondent was stood down, pending an investigation.

Each week, presenter Linton Besser and the *Media Watch* journalists examine the news behind the news, with a sharp eye for hypocrisy, fakery or media skulduggery.

## JUDGES' COMMENTS

*Media Watch* is reclaiming its status as a sharp and punchy investigator of errors and oversights, and champion of journalistic integrity. This series of snappy sharp scoops shone an uncomfortable light on the shoddy deception of Nine's *Find My Beach House* and other 'reality' shows; exposed the duchessing of an ABC reporter by defence giants; and fearlessly revealed the ABC chairman's ill-judged serial intervention in radio programming to facilitate an old acquaintance's self-promotion.



**Thomson Geer**  
Lawyers

## Congratulations to the finalists and winners of the 70<sup>th</sup> Walkley Awards 2025

Thomson Geer is proud to sponsor this year's Walkley Award for Commentary, Analysis, Opinion and Critique



# NIKON-WALKLEY PRESS PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

Award Partner Nikon

**Christopher Hopkins**, Freelance, Al Jazeera, *The Age*, *The Guardian*, '2024/25 folio'



In an increasingly competitive climate for freelance photojournalists, Christopher Hopkins' year in pictures is distinguished by the variety he produced in both commissioned and pitched assignments. The folio covers portraiture, news, sport and feature reportage with an aesthetic sensibility, while ensuring the focus remains on the subject and the issue at hand.

The subjects — Palestine victims, Indigenous welfare, the public housing crisis, NDIS failures — portray with compelling intimacy some of the major issues reported in Australia's media over the year.

The judges commented on the photographer's real understanding of light. "He uses light and framing to capture the emotion of the stories he is telling in his painterly photos. He is a powerful storyteller who uses beauty and an artistic approach to his assignments, whether shot in colour or in black and white."

Christopher Hopkins works as a freelance photojournalist, dividing his time between long-term project work and commissioned assignments for major media outlets such as *The Guardian*, Al Jazeera and *The Age*.

1. Australia's world tennis number nine, Alex de Minaur, lunges for a return in his second round match against American Tristan Boyer at the 2025 Australian Open. De Minaur ultimately lost to eventual champion Jannik Sinner in the quarter finals
2. In Uganda, 13-year-old Jesca\* is comforted by her mother Ruth\* in the bedroom they share with Jesca's sister Mariam\*. Jesca and Mariam both live with intellectual disabilities. Jesca became pregnant through rape. Uganda's healthcare system for people living with disability has major flaws, but the justice system also plays a part in their ostracism by the community. \*Names changed for security reasons.
3. Kathy Rieger comforts her 37-year-old son Steven, who lives with cerebral palsy, uncontrolled epilepsy and scoliosis, and is non-verbal and bed-ridden. Kathy, now 78, was diagnosed in 2023 with breast cancer, which has now metastasised to her brain, liver and spine. Steven requires 15 hours of dedicated care per day but the NDIS has cut this back to 10 hours per day. This means Kathy is left as his carer while she is dying from cancer.
4. Ranem Abu Zneid was studying in the West Bank in November 2024 when her apartment was fired on by Israeli forces. Ranem was struck in the face and chest by shrapnel. She later lost her right eye. She is now back in Australia, but her plans to work in dentistry have been shattered.
5. Australian tennis player Nick Kyrgios makes his comeback to the main draw of the 2025 Australian Open after a prolonged injury layoff.
6. Anti-war and pro-Palestine activists are forced back by mounted police after blockading the entrance to the Land Forces International Land Defence Exposition in Melbourne in September 2024. Tensions about the Israeli military action in Gaza had boiled over and special operations police used tear gas, flash bombs, capsicum spray and rubber bullets to disperse the crowd.



1.



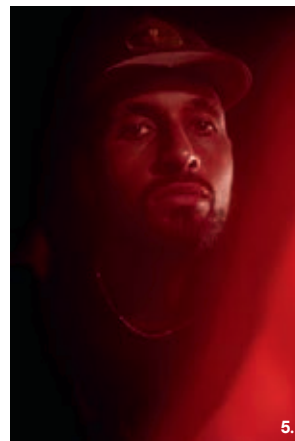
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# ALL MEDIA: EXPLANATORY JOURNALISM

**Lucy King, Joshua Peach, Fiona Buffini, Bryan Cook**, *The Australian Financial Review*, ‘Inside Australia’s \$11b charity stockpile’



This explainer/investigation set out to illuminate the complex and little known world of Private Ancillary Funds (PAFs), the preferred tax-effective giving vehicle for Australia’s wealthiest people, to question the true public benefit of an estimated \$7 billion in forgone tax revenue. In the two decades since PAFs were created, these ‘giving funds’ have been left to operate largely outside public scrutiny.

The team developed a technique to cross-reference existing databases to create the first-ever comprehensive database of PAF holders, the amount of untaxed cash within them, and the rate at which they give. They used AI to help highlight hidden PAFs that did not publicly declare their finances. They published an open source database for charities to reference and download, something for which they had previously had to pay \$15,000 to private research providers. Aside from the public benefit to charities, this series transformed an arcane area of tax policy, and scattered regulatory filings, into a compelling story of wealth, ethics and accountability.

*The Australian Financial Review’s* data team combines reporting, data analysis, graphic design and coding to find, investigate and explain stories.

## JUDGES’ COMMENTS

This outstanding piece of explanatory investigative journalism clearly set out how Australia’s wealthiest deploy complex, opaque Private Ancillary Funds (PAFs) to channel their giving and avoid billions of dollars in tax. The reporting team also created a fantastic open source resource cross-referencing Australian Business Number, Australian Taxation Office and Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission databases to search 2,390 PAFs, making it a particularly useful tool for charities.



# ALL MEDIA: COVERAGE OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Award partner National Indigenous Times

## Guardian Australia's Indigenous Affairs Team, Guardian Australia, 'The Descendants'



This series explores the deeply personal process of truth-telling about Australia's past.

In researching families connected to the Bootenall massacre in Western Australia, the

team unearthed a diary by colonist Major Logue. It had passages in code that described the murder of at least 19 Yamatji people, killed by Logue or others.

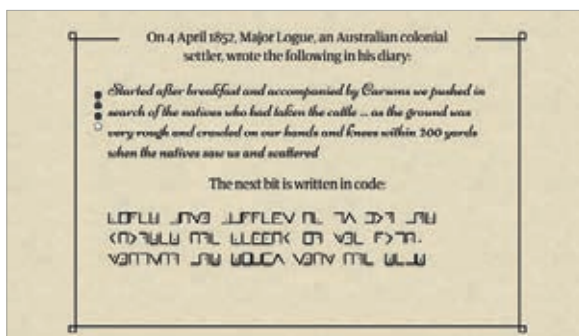
In Queensland, the reporters went to the site of the Cullin-la-ringo massacre — one of the largest killings of white settlers by Indigenous peoples in Queensland — which was used to justify lethal reprisals that all but wiped out the local Gayiri people. The team explored the possible involvement of AFL founder Tom Wills in the reprisal attacks and uncovered links to Australia's oldest company, AACo, which has yet to reckon with this part of its past.

The series prompted a flood of correspondence from other Australians with massacres in their bloodlines who saw a way to begin conversations in their own families and communities.

Lorena Allam is a Gamilaraay and Yawalaraay woman, former Indigenous affairs editor at *Guardian Australia* and a professor at the Jumbunna Institute at the University of Technology, Sydney. Sarah Collard, a Ballardong Noongar woman, and Ella Archibald-Binge, a Kamilaroi woman, are Indigenous affairs reporters at *Guardian Australia*.

### JUDGES' COMMENTS

'The Descendants' offers a powerful insight into hidden stories of colonial violence. It combines evocative writing, rigorous research and innovative digital formats. With stylised photography, interactive mapping and coded diary translations, the series places readers at the centre of the investigations.



**NIT**  
 NATIONAL INDIGENOUS TIMES

National Indigenous Times proudly supports the Indigenous Affairs Award.

*Congratulations to the winner and all finalists for honouring powerful storytelling that brings untold stories to light and uplifts Indigenous voices.*



# ALL MEDIA: COVERAGE OF COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS

Award partner BHP

**Joanna Woodburn, Hannah Meagher, Fred Shaw, Shaun Kingma, ABC Orange, 7.30, ABC News, 'Whistleblower doctors expose cancer surgery'**



Joanna Woodburn spent six weeks gathering evidence that showed the care of patients at Orange Hospital, one of NSW's biggest regional cancer centres, was being compromised for the sake of budgets and KPIs. Numerous doctors verified that their cancer surgeries were being downgraded or delayed by hospital management, allegedly to avoid breaching waiting list targets. After the story aired, NSW health minister, Ryan Park, met with the hospital's surgeons and NSW Health acted on their concerns.

Joanna Woodburn is an ABC investigative journalist based in Orange, NSW. Hannah Meagher is a producer with 7.30, Shaun Kingma is a camera operator with the ABC and Fred Shaw is an editor with 7.30.

## JUDGES' COMMENTS

The stories about whistleblower doctors in Orange show why regional journalism is so important to the communities it serves. A fantastic example of journalism holding people to account on important issues.



## Congratulations to the **2025 Walkley Awards finalists and winners.**

BHP is a proud sponsor of the All Media: Coverage of Community and Regional Affairs Award.

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# SPORTS JOURNALISM

Award partner University of Queensland

## Jessica Halloran, Stephen Rice, *The Australian*, 'Predator in the vault'



Abuse of athletes, including Olympic gold medallist Nina Kennedy, by famed Olympic pole vault coach Alex Parnov remained secret for decades until *The Australian* exposed his predatory behaviour.

Kennedy and eight other female athletes revealed how they had been abused — physically, mentally and sexually — by the celebrated coach. Acting on a single tip after the Paris Olympics last year, Halloran and Rice started reaching out to female athletes who had been coached by Parnov.

It became clear the Russian-born coach was a serial predator, and that his activities had been covered up by the Western Australian Institute of Sport (WAIS). The reporters obtained a secret report which revealed athletes had pleaded with WAIS to hold him accountable. They also found a video of Parnov running his hand across the bottom of the then 18-year-old Kennedy. Police have now launched an investigation into Parnov, and sporting bodies are reviewing how his actions went unchecked for so long.

Jessica Halloran is a Walkley Award-winning writer who has reported from Olympic Games, world swimming and athletics championships. Stephen Rice is the Walkley Award-winning editor of *The Australian's* NSW bureau.

### JUDGES' COMMENTS

To bring to light this shocking tale of malfeasance, Halloran and Rice needed patience, discretion and doggedness. They had to gain the trust of damaged athletes, and be both sensitive and unflinching in how they told the story. This series of stories could leave no-one unmoved.



CREATE CHANGE

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## SPORT PHOTOGRAPHY

**David Gray**, Agence France-Presse,  
'Sporting moments'



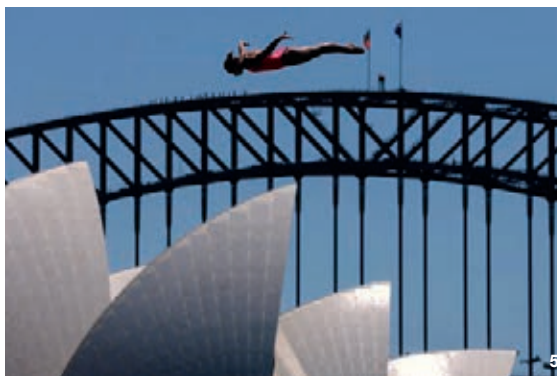
This entry showcases David Gray's efforts in both timing and positioning to obtain the greatest visual effect.

Capturing a surfer at Bondi Beach riding a gigantic wave for no more than three seconds was about getting in just the right spot. Snapping tennis player Ben Shelton on Rod Laver Arena as he served out of the shadows and into bright sunshine involved knowing where to stand for the exact moment when the sun created a dramatic effect. Precise timing was needed to show the unusual shape the ball took when Australian tennis player Jordan Thompson hit a return with great force. The tackle by Australia's Len Ikitau on British & Irish Lions player Sione Tuipulotu was an extremely fast-moving moment. And capturing Ukrainian diver Nelli Chukanivska apparently hanging above the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House required precision timing and perfect positioning to showcase both the diver and the spectacular background.

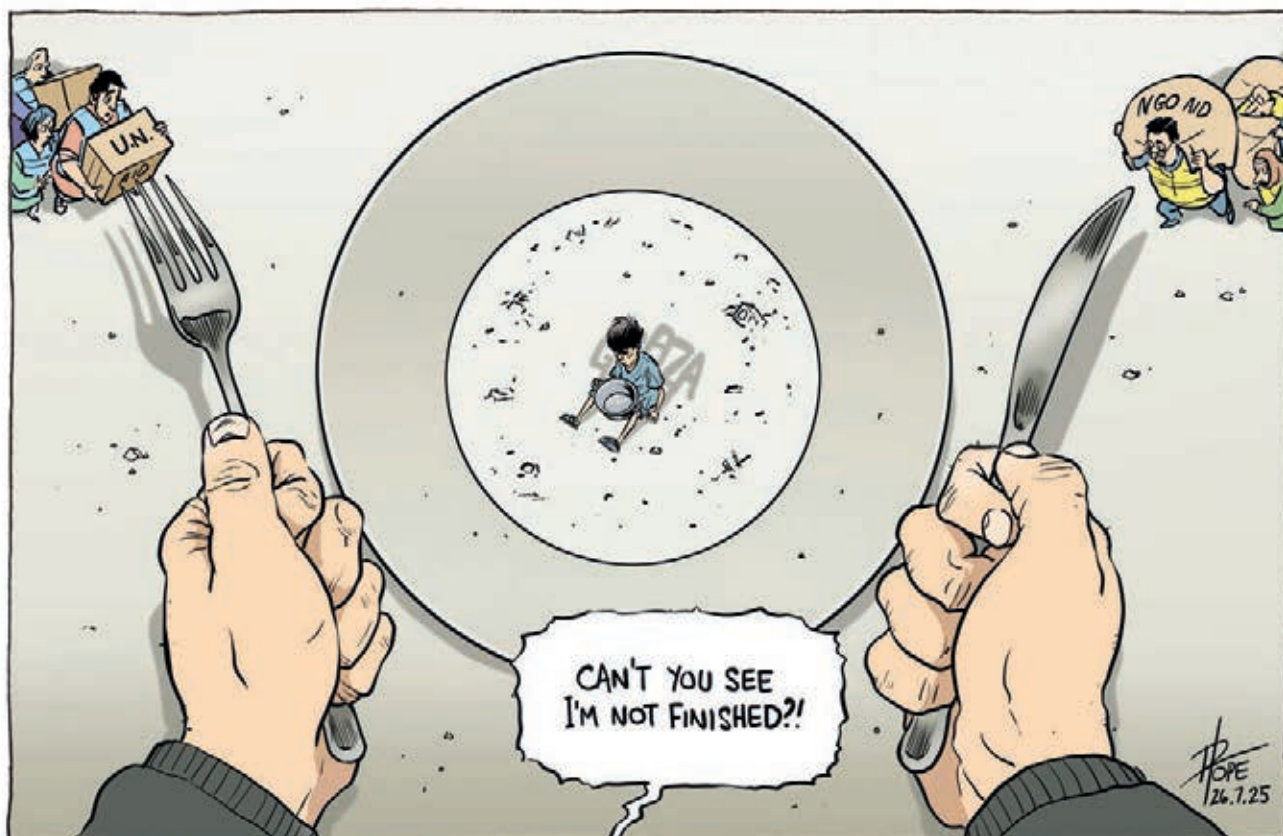
### JUDGES' COMMENTS

David Gray achieved a broad range of artistic shots, showing different angles and ideas. In this narrow selection, every frame is a stand-alone and every picture could hold a major story. The level of artistry is stunning.

1. A surfer rides a huge wave at Bondi Beach in Sydney as large swells and high winds hit the east coast of Australia on April 1 2025.
2. Australia's Jordan Thompson hits a return against Portugal's Nuno Borges during their men's singles match on day four of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on January 15 2025.
3. Australia's Len Ikitau tackles British & Irish Lions player Sione Tuipulotu during the first Rugby Union Test match at Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane on July 19 2025.
4. USA's Ben Shelton serves against Italy's Lorenzo Sonego during their men's singles quarter-final match on day 11 of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on January 22 2025.
5. Nelli Chukanivska from Ukraine competes in the Cliff Diving World Series competition held in front of the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge in Sydney on November 8 2024.



## CARTOON



David Pope, *The Canberra Times*, 'Gaza'



Gaza has long been subject to restrictions on movement and goods, imposed by Israel, but that blockade was intensified as part of Israel's military assault on Gaza following deadly attacks by Hamas in Israel on October 7 2023.

As images of starving children in Gaza made their way onto TV screens and phone feeds around the world, calls grew for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. In Australia, this spurred huge outpourings of public dismay and anguish, such as Sydney's March for Humanity across the Sydney Harbour Bridge on Sunday August 3, a fortnight after this cartoon was published.

This cartoon was a creative way to look at the starvation, denial of aid and ongoing war in Gaza.

"There are days where the news is dominated by stories so terrible that it seems like there is no useful role a cartoon can play," Pope says. "Yet to settle on some other topic might be read as the wilful shutting of one's eyes. There is no drawing that could shock or move a reader more than an actual news photograph of a starving child."

David Pope draws political cartoons each day for *The Canberra Times* and other mastheads of ACM.

### JUDGES' COMMENTS

The cartoonist used loaded but apt imagery to make a point: the aggressive use of the knife and fork to hold off NGO workers, the small child on an almost empty plate, and the juxtaposition of this with the giant hands of the otherwise unseen diner. The cartoon also stands apart from the news photographs of Gaza being published in the media, and gives the audience something more.

## AUDIO SHORT (under 20 minutes)

Award Partner ABC

### Lucy Barbour, ABC News, AM, ‘Australia’s “unspoken” abortion ban’



Lucy Barbour began researching abortion access in 2024, collecting personal stories from women across regional and rural NSW and exposing systemic barriers to a time-critical, legal form of health care.

She independently verified a lead, and then tracked down a woman who had been turned away from Queanbeyan District Hospital despite being booked in for a surgical termination for a fetal malformation. The woman agreed to share her story on condition of anonymity.

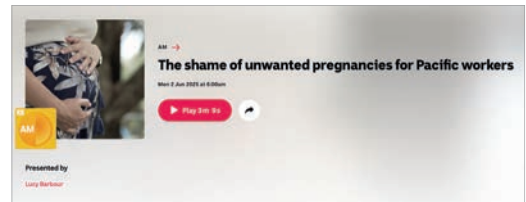
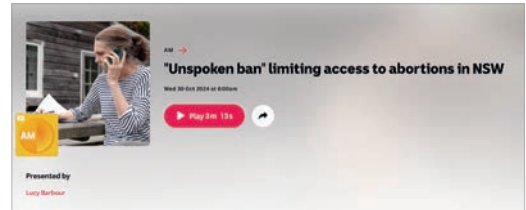
After AM broadcast the story, the hospital reinstated its surgical abortion service and also announced it would establish a new clinic on the NSW South Coast. Barbour’s subsequent reporting uncovered a formal policy document effectively banning abortions at Orange Health Service (OHS) for patients seeking terminations for non-medical reasons. The NSW health minister directly intervened to announce that abortion services at OHS had been reinstated. Another of Barbour’s stories revealed that a group of doctors from across the country had referred the matter to the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption.

The secretary of NSW Health later made an apology to women who had been unable to access abortion care across the state and directly credited the ABC’s reporting with exposing systemic issues.

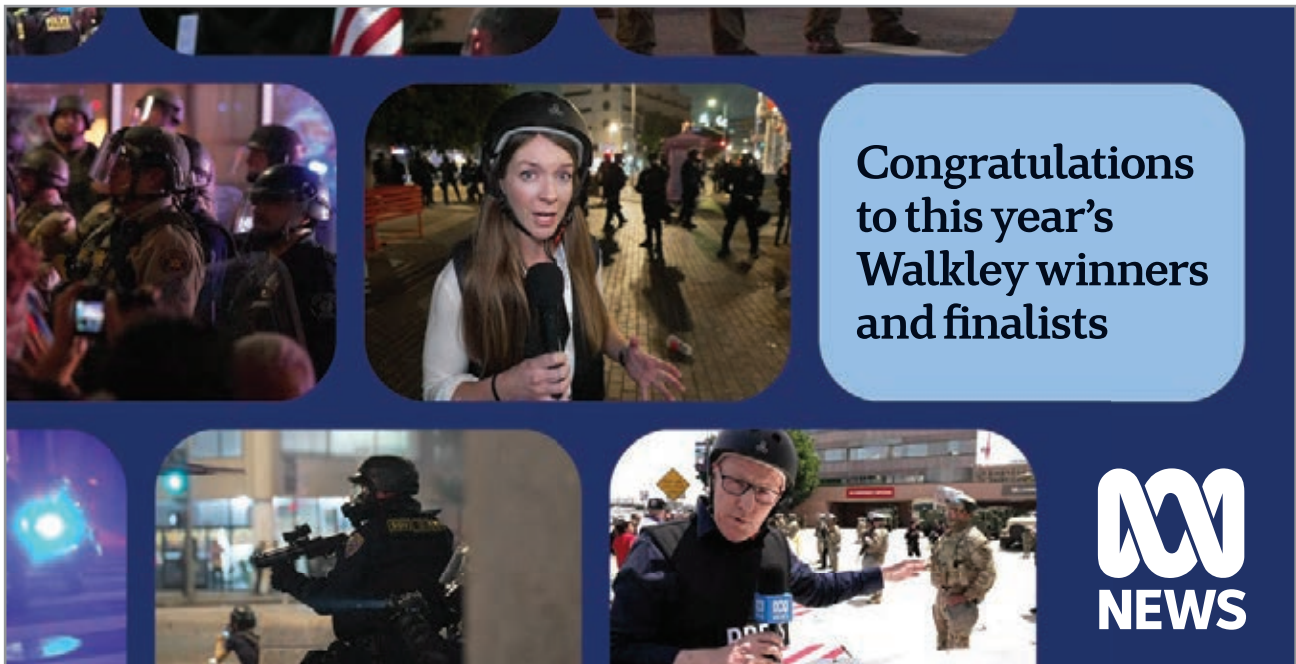
Lucy Barbour is ABC News’ national regional affairs reporter. She has covered federal politics for television, audio and digital, and worked for *Landline*, *7.30*, and the flagship radio news and current affairs programs *AM*, *The World Today* and *PM*.

#### JUDGES’ COMMENTS

This work put the spotlight on barriers to legal health procedures in regional Australia. Barbour’s use of an anonymous case study, a woman whose surgical abortion was suddenly cancelled, highlighted the issue. Her follow-up reporting gained national attention and led directly to termination services being restored in two health districts.



“The secretary of NSW Health later made an apology to women who had been unable to access abortion care across the state and directly credited the ABC’s reporting with exposing systemic issues.”



## AUDIO LONG (over 20 minutes)

### Anne Connolly and the *Background Briefing* team, ABC, *Background Briefing*, ‘The invisible killer’



This five-part true crime podcast is the result of a year-long investigation into the murders and attempted murder of aged-care residents in Anne Connolly’s home town of Newcastle, NSW, in 2013.

It included a painstaking deep dive into an entire brief of evidence and exclusive access to the man convicted of the crimes. Carer Garry Davis proclaimed his innocence, but was sentenced to 40 years in prison

for the crimes — with no scientific evidence, no eyewitnesses and no motive. Connolly interviewed him in Goulburn prison over six months, and spoke to police, ex-colleagues, and medical and legal experts. The team examined tens of thousands of medical and legal documents. Among them, they found evidence that was damning to Davis’s case but that the police had missed and never put to him.

The podcast raised real questions about the vulnerability of the elderly, the lack of monitoring of carers in the sector, and the lack of safeguards.

Reporter Anne Connolly is an investigative journalist with the ABC and a Gold Walkley Award winner. Producer Ninah Kopel and Echo Hui are award-winning journalists with the ABC’s Investigations unit. Gina McKeon is an award-winning journalist and producer with ABC’s *Background Briefing*.

#### JUDGES’ COMMENTS

A gripping, high-impact, year-long investigation into the mysterious deaths of multiple aged-care residents. This historical story is re-examined with fresh eyes to uncover multiple new threads, including the trial’s brief of evidence, hours of police recordings, and an exclusive interview with the man jailed for injecting these residents with insulin. The series opens up questions about Australia’s aged care system and the people we trust to care for our most vulnerable.



“The podcast raised real questions about the vulnerability of the elderly, the lack of monitoring of carers in the sector, and the lack of safeguards.”

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## DIGITAL MEDIA: INNOVATION JOURNALISM

Award Partner Master Builders Australia

**Badiucao, Matthew Absalom-Wong, Patrick O’Neil, Tom McKendrick**, *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, ‘Watched, followed, threatened. Now an imposter is claiming to be me’



This is the story of Badiucao, an internationally recognised artist, illustrator and cartoonist. He is also a Chinese dissident who, at the time of this project, could not get a commercial gallery to represent him in Australia. And there also happens to be an imposter in Melbourne claiming to be him.

Badiucao’s tale exposes the intimidation he suffers here from the Chinese Communist Party, even though he is an Australian citizen. And it exposes an art world that is cowed by Chinese government influence, fearful of the commercial and political consequences of supporting a Chinese dissident.

Using a mixture of art, words and animation, this immersive feature opened a window into a slice of Badiucao’s life in Melbourne and offered a warning to all Australians.

Political cartoonist Badiucao produced artwork that became the basis for the story. Opinion editor Patrick O’Neil crafted the words, creative director Matthew Absalom-Wong built and designed the feature as well as animated parts, and head of audio and video, Tom McKendrick, completed the team.

### JUDGES’ COMMENTS

A unique look at one of the most challenging security threats of our time, told through the experiences of a dissident Chinese artist in first-person narrative and his stunning pop-art illustrations. This innovative and provocative report uses interactive art that is as sinister as it is beautiful to highlight the deep reach of the Chinese Communist Party into Australia.



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# SCOOP OF THE YEAR

Award partner *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*

## Robyn Riley, *Herald Sun*, ‘Mum gives birth to the wrong baby’



Medical editor Robyn Riley heard that Monash IVF had transferred the wrong embryo to a patient and that a Queensland mother had unwittingly given birth to a stranger’s baby.

Riley, the author of books on the history of IVF in Australia, broke the story and ensured it went live on the *Herald Sun*’s website first, before Monash IVF confirmed not only that the story was true, but that a baby had indeed been born. National and international media followed up the scoop.

Being first was important, but so too was getting the story right, given it involved a toddler and two families who had only discovered the mix-up by accident a few weeks earlier. This story led to the federal health minister launching a national review into IVF accreditation, \$60 million being wiped off Monash IVF’s shareholder value, and the resignation of its CEO. The industry nationwide is now under the regulator’s spotlight.

Robyn Riley is the *Herald Sun*’s medical editor. A senior journalist with more than 30 years’ experience covering health and medical research, she is also the author of three health books and a former syndicated columnist.

### JUDGES’ COMMENTS

Robyn Riley revealed that Monash IVF was responsible for a woman receiving the wrong embryo and giving birth to a stranger’s baby. This groundbreaking story led to more mix-up disclosures, a national review of fertility programs, and calls for regulation to protect the interests of IVF couples.



*The Sydney Morning Herald*  
INDEPENDENT. ALWAYS.

THE *AGE*  
INDEPENDENT. ALWAYS.

## Celebrating reason, integrity and courage in journalism

Congratulations to all 2025 Walkley Award winners and finalists.

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# ALL MEDIA: COVERAGE OF A MAJOR NEWS EVENT OR ISSUE

**The Age Mushroom Trial team,**  
*The Age*, ‘The mushroom case: A family meal and a courtroom drama’



When a seemingly ordinary Sunday lunch in regional Victoria ended in tragedy, *The Age* recognised this wasn't just a local crime — it was a global story. The so-called ‘mushroom murder case’ would span two

years of detailed investigation, courtroom drama and public obsession. This coverage brought readers inside the courtroom, behind the closed doors of grieving families and deep into the psychological labyrinth of Erin Patterson’s world.

Forty days of court reporting were delivered in real time, many of these via a blog, setting a new benchmark for court coverage. Unlike any other blog of its kind globally, this wasn't merely reactive reporting — it was narrative storytelling. It involved a reporter with a coveted seat inside the courtroom, a second outside, and an editor to curate these updates into digestible narrative arcs, like an episode in a courtroom drama. Another editor ensured factual accuracy and instant digital publishing excellence.

Powerful, exclusive features brought readers to the heart of the tragedy. From the suppressed account of the hospital chapel meeting, where Simon Patterson first alleged his wife had tried to poison him, to Heather Wilkinson’s final six whispered words, it revealed the human cost beyond the courtroom’s walls.

*The Age*’s digital and editorial teams worked closely with crime reporters Erin Pearson and Marta Pascual Juanola, and with veteran photographer Jason South at the Morwell courthouse to produce constant updates on the high-profile murder trial. Senior reporter Chris Vedelago also filed exclusive stories.

## JUDGES’ COMMENTS

This entry combined real-time court reporting with structured narrative storytelling. A live blog, shaped by reporters inside and outside the courtroom, offered readers timely updates with emotional nuance. The coverage extended across platforms, including podcasts and visual features, and was commended by the judges for its layered approach and exclusive reporting that deepened public understanding of the case.

**THE AGE**

**The chapel meeting that set police on the path of a poisoner**

An Don and Gail Patterson and Heather Wilkinson lay dying, their adult children gathered in a hospital prayer room. It was a quiet place to reveal a dreadful mystery.

By Erin Pearson and Chris Vedelago  
August 6, 2023

Erin Pearson speaks about her gripping profiles in the trial. Jason South

**I** was a gathering here of dead, not dying. On August 2, 2023, the choral choir Patterson and Wilkinson's last song sang at the Austin Hospital's 24-hour chapel.

Just down the corridor, five of their loved ones lay desperately ill in hospital beds. Avoid constant distressing updates from the team, Simon Patterson had a secret in store — a chilling explanation and a story of hidden facts.

Simon Patterson (second from left) after giving evidence in the trial. Jason South

Erin Pearson wanted to apologise, and, she can attest, he told them, that he'd let the people they loved being buried with a woman he now believed had tried to kill him. He would only speak, who had tried to kill him before.

The length of a multi-faith prayer room, not down above the hearing emergency department, offered a quiet, private space for the meeting. Inside, black chairs were arranged in a circle on the purple carpet. Facing a window that like the bench, with light green steps laid out to the side but outside those walls, within the hospital, Don and Gail Patterson, along with Ian and Heather Wilkinson, fought desperately for their lives as innocent men.

Kim, Simon (second), was a poisoner. She had tried to kill him, he told the adult children huddled in the prayer room. Now, he said, their family had become her target.

Erin Pearson and Don Patterson at the hospital home where the deadly lunch was served.

"Wilkinson wanted to tell us that he suspected his own illnesses had been a deliberate act — that he'd stopped eating food Erin had prepared because he suspected that she might have been poisoning us," Ruth Daniels, the Wilkinson daughter, told a Supreme Court pretrial hearing.

"And that he was really sorry that he hadn't told our family or our parents before this, but he thought that he was the only person that she was targeting and that they'd be safe."

The next day, Simon emailed his medical records to the family on prison.

Shortly afterwards, Daniels said, members of the Wilkinson family went to police to arrest their son.

**The untold story**

The account of the meeting at the Austin Hospital chapel was never told to the jury — not fact but publicly revealed before — kept secret by court orders finally lifted on Friday.

Simon's allegations that his estranged wife had poisoned him on no less than three occasions in 2012, 12 hours of the trial of three counts of attempted murder and two counts of murder.

**THE AGE**

**As her liver collapsed, a dying mushroom patient gently uttered six words to doctor Chris Webster**

A doctor had just checked on a 24-hour shift. An unexpected phone call would trigger a chain of events and catapult him into the spotlight.

By Erin Pearson  
August 6, 2023

Chris Webster treated for Wilkinson after the courtroom trial. Jason South

Erin Pearson has been heard of assisting three people who try to kill a health care worker with their last breaths. Jason South

**D**octor Chris Webster had medical records neatly stacked before him at the bench. Hospital staff were wanted to help him. He had even discussed his intentions with the director of medical services and the chief executive officer at Launceston Hospital. As the doctor's words, all he needed to do was remember not to breathe.

"This is the Chris Webster calling from Launceston Hospital. I have a woman regarding a patient that presented here earlier, that has left the building and is potentially exposed to a fatal agent," Webster calmly said the operator.

"The last name is Patterson, Kim."

In the brief conversation that followed, Webster carefully laid out what he knew. Don Patterson, an unemployed teacher of two-hour Launceston, had served a total of four months in jail for his role over the weekend. The police had been to visit him in the hospital. There were no inmates on an emergency hospital. He was about to transfer the other one down from Launceston.

Months after staff told the man he was convicted of three counts of attempted murder, Patterson, who said he was suffering from gastro-oesophageal reflux, the hospital heard from hospital.

"It was clear for the more to begin observations, and I was managing the value clinically sound patients," Webster told the court. "I had a friend that had been where the mushrooms were obtained, and when I was attending for the other patients, the man informed me that he had changed himself against medical advice."

It was the morning of July 21, 2023, and the signs were clear: a patient given to a hospital in a local hospital will also would come to define the next two years of Webster's life.

It would be the first time that emergency services would have about the details of what would eventually claim the lives of three people, triggering a chain of events that eventually led police to uncover the last willings between inside a paper bag at the bedside of Patterson's life.

Erin Pearson in a courtroom setting. Jason South

Two years after Webster's phone call, Patterson would be found guilty of two counts of murder over the death of her parents in law Don and Gail Patterson, and Don's sister Heather Wilkinson.

He would also be found guilty of attempted murder over a track with death experienced by Webster's husband, Elizabeth Justice Justice for Wilkinson.

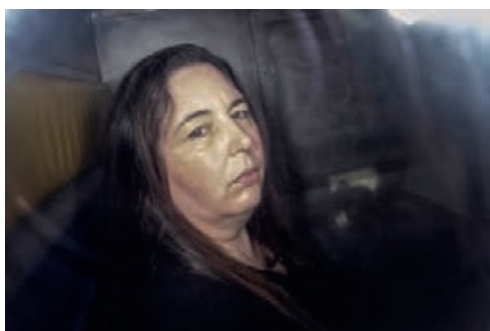
"The details is complex writing, and you think about the narrative, and I think, 'I'll write this, it would be critical for being on the list. But the initial, and here it is, we are writing it,'" Webster tells The Age.

**The hours after the 'Michelin star meal'**

Now that the murder trial is over, Webster has ready to talk about the madness of it all — his role as a first step in the machine of the story that captured any national headlines. The anxiety and the weight of the case on his shoulders. The exhilaration of stepping out of the witness box. The relief of seeing justice for Wilkinson's family on his own words.

"I still I started talking about the whole situation. I didn't realize how much it was affecting me in terms of my levels of anxiety," says Webster, making his appearance in court and a part of 'Crime City' weeks. "It was quite difficult to have someone [the] some of the doctors that work here — there were their friends. There were people that were part of their church community."

# NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY



## Martin Keep, Agence France-Presse, 'Erin Patterson'



These images form part of a series of seven frames that capture convicted murderer Erin Patterson in a rare unguarded moment during her trial. In the perfect meeting of planning and opportunity, Martin Keep used a custom-built camera rig to get as much light as possible into the miniscule windows of the prison transport vehicle that carried Patterson in and out of the Latrobe Valley Magistrates' Court every Monday morning and Friday afternoon.

Over the 10-week trial, these were the only images of Patterson captured, despite intense efforts by a number of dedicated photographers to get the shots. When the verdict dropped on July 8, these images went around the world within seconds, offering an extremely rare look directly into the eye of a convicted triple-murderer. These were the shots every news organisation in the world wanted.

Martin Keep is a Melbourne-based freelancer, covering news and sport for AFP.

### JUDGES' COMMENTS

Every big news story has an image, and this one is seared into the memory. This was the biggest story of the year and Keep's strong series of images was sold internationally. The judges recognised the photographer's perseverance and resourcefulness in setting up a custom-built camera rig to get as much light as possible into the window of the dark, moving, prison transport vehicle, an extremely hard-to-shoot location. He then waited patiently for his moment over a number of days. All these elements, and a great deal of thought and preparation, went into achieving this series of shots.

In a world exclusive, AFP's Martin Keep captured Erin Patterson arriving in the back of a prison transport vehicle at Latrobe Valley Magistrates' Court in Morwell, Victoria, on May 12 2025. These images form part of a series of seven frames that capture her in a rare unguarded moment.

## ALL MEDIA: SPECIALIST AND BEAT REPORTING

**Kate Aubusson, Aisha Dow, Emily Kaine, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, ‘Medical misogyny investigation’**



This crowd-sourced investigation exposed the shocking and deadly impact of medical misogyny in Australia. After covering many stories over the years in which gender bias and medical misogyny seemed to be a factor, the team decided to embark on an investigation shaped by patients’ experiences.

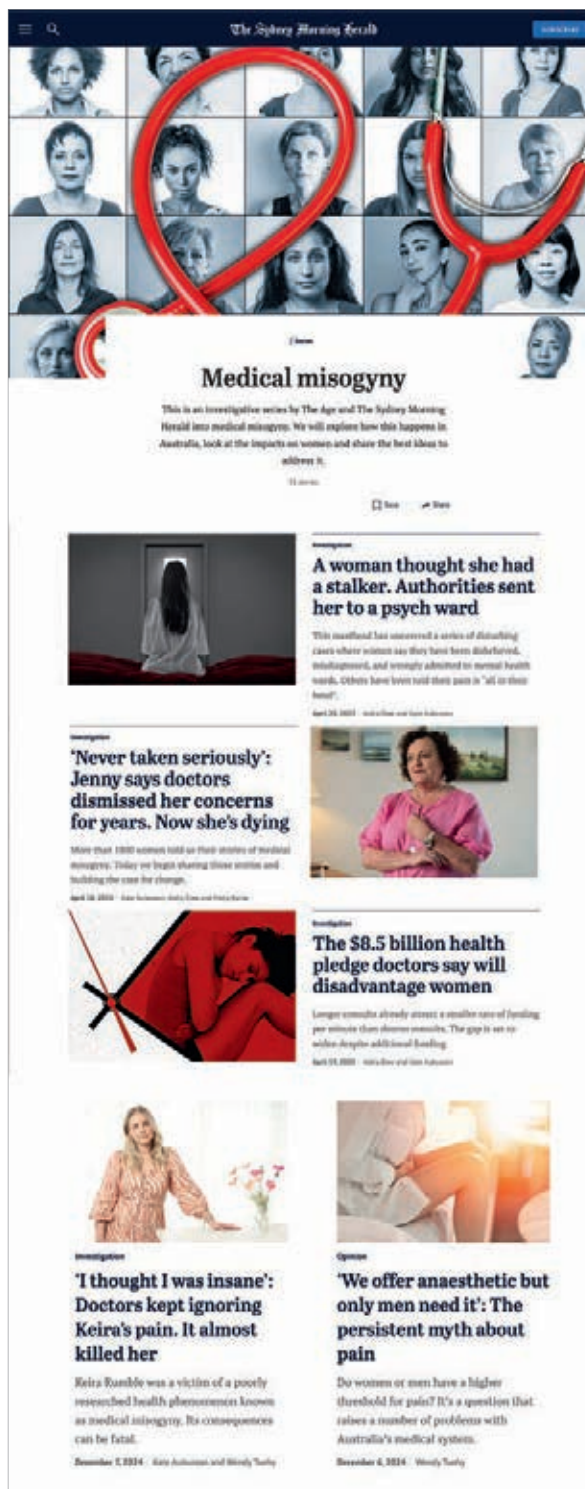
Over eight months, they read the submissions from more than 2000 women who responded to the callout, then conducted detailed interviews with dozens. This challenging investigation involved navigating complex medical case studies of traumatised patients, including those with terminal diagnoses following treatment delays and misdiagnoses. The team rigorously tested their accounts, reviewing medical records, interviewing their healthcare providers, relatives and friends, and securing analyses by independent experts.

The series was meticulously researched, from analysing dense medical research to interrogating hostile leadership figures who attempted to intimidate the journalists and overwhelm them with inscrutable data and academic heft.

The team, made up of *The Sydney Morning Herald*’s health editor, Kate Aubusson, *The Age* investigative reporter and former health editor Aisha Dow, and *Herald* reporter Emily Kaine, said the response from readers has been overwhelming.

### JUDGES’ COMMENTS

This innovative, exhaustively researched series of reports by senior health reporters at *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* uses potent crowdsourced stories to lift the lid on the many ways institutionalised misogyny still defines medical care. The impact of this richly reported and authoritative project was so undeniable it spurred change in the way women are treated.



# ALL MEDIA: BUSINESS JOURNALISM

Award Partner ING Australia

## Neil Chenoweth, Mark Di Stefano, *The Australian Financial Review*, ‘The downfall of MinRes and Chris Ellison’



There were few figures richer or more powerful in the country’s mining establishment than Chris Ellison, the founder of Mineral Resources. The New Zealand-born maverick built his humble mining services business into a \$15 billion colossus. Then this series of stories exposed how he did it — and now his house of cards lies in ruins.

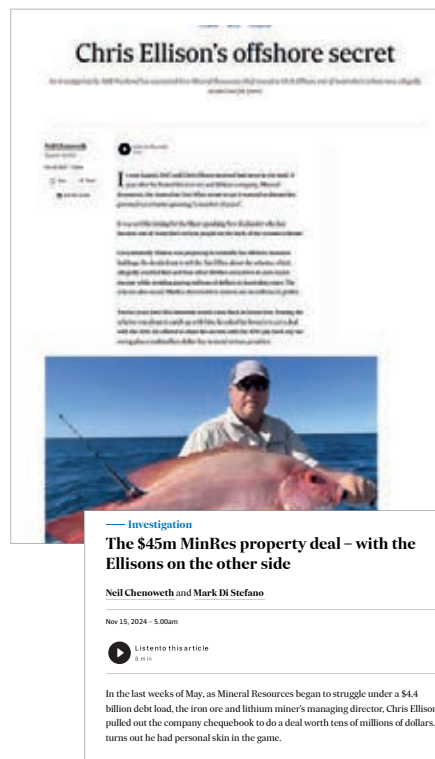
It began with a detailed investigation into Ellison’s brazen offshore tax scheme, then shifted to whistleblower complaints, including complaints about sweetheart property deals and his use of company resources. Weeks of pressure forced the company’s board to admit Ellison had “not acted with integrity” and he would be forced to pay back millions in misused money and resources. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission launched an investigation into Ellison and MinRes, and shareholders began a class action alleging they were misled.

Among mining types, three people are so well known they can be identified with just their first names: Gina Rinehart, Twiggy Forrest and Chris Ellison. The sprawling scandal sparked by these stories means one is no longer known for just his successes.

Two-time Gold Walkley winner Neil Chenoweth, an investigative journalist who worked for 32 years at *The Australian Financial Review*, teamed with Mark Di Stefano, the editor of that newspaper’s ‘Rear Window’ column, to reveal the eye-watering financial implications of a shocking governance scandal.

### JUDGES’ COMMENTS

A world-class effort. One of the most important scoops in Australian financial journalism in recent years. The consequences were the halving of the MinRes share price, the resignation of the chairman and three directors, and a cloud over the future of the chief executive. An excellent piece of investigative journalism highlighting the need for improved corporate governance to protect shareholders in public companies.



# Well said.

Congratulations to all 2025 Walkley Awards winners from ING.

ing.com.au




## TV/VIDEO: CAMERAWORK

### **Tim Noonan**, Freelance/SBS, *Hunt for Truth: Tasmanian Tiger*



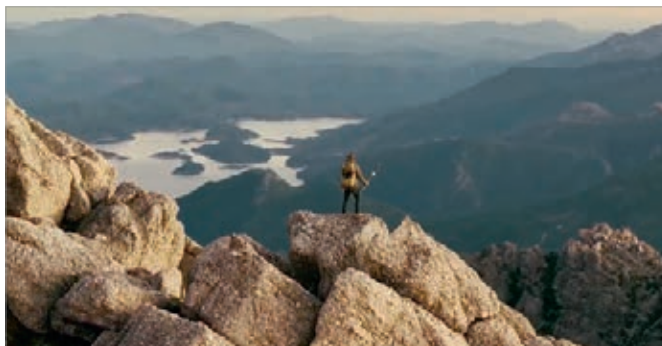
Video journalist and filmmaker Tim Noonan wanted to explore the Tassie tiger mystery with a fresh lens. He conceived, produced and filmed this series entirely alone in some of the most remote and extreme terrain in Tasmania and Papua New Guinea, giving him special access to people and places that would have been compromised by a large crew.

He carried, operated and maintained all equipment in the field while reporting, directing, producing and executive producing it all on an extremely limited budget. At times, this meant shouldering 30 to 40 kilograms of gear for weeks at a time while trekking into the Tasmanian wilderness. Part of his shooting style was to take a 'fixed-rig' approach on the road, sometimes juggling four cameras simultaneously (plus audio and drone) all by himself.

Tim Noonan is a Walkley Award-winning documentary filmmaker and journalist, known for his immersive storytelling, which has appeared on Netflix, BBC, Discovery, SBS, Seven and networks around the world.

#### **JUDGES' COMMENTS**

Tim Noonan is the ultimate one-man camera machine, the Inspector Gadget of the industry. From sweeping drone shots over snow-covered mountains to dramatic boat vision and fast-paced, on-ground filming, he seamlessly brings the audience on a wild journey with him, even in rugged conditions. Noonan maintains an authentic and engaging style of storytelling, all while operating multiple cameras solo with striking framing. *Hunt for Truth* is an impressive feat that he made look effortless. A true craftsman's contribution to the documentary world and a standout example of solo filmmaking.



# TV/VIDEO: NEWS REPORTING

Award Partner Seven

## Andrew Probyn, Nine, Nine News, ‘Russian gangsters and the Medibank hack’



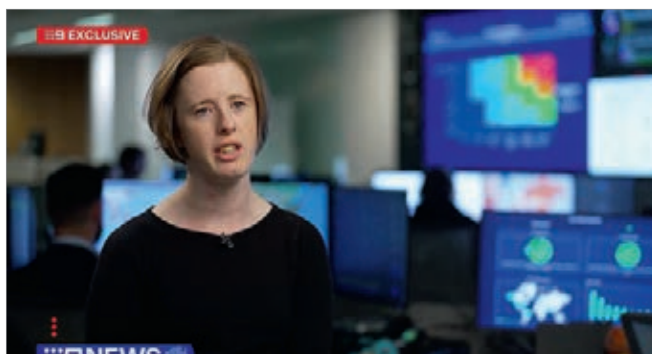
Andrew Probyn began working on this TV exclusive three years ago, when he wrote and researched a documentary on Australia’s cyber spies for the ABC. In February 2025, he revealed exclusively for Nine News how Australian cyber spies had tracked down a gang of hi-tech Russian gangsters who had been storing the stolen Medibank data of millions of Australians on a Siberian computer server.

He not only showed the extent of Australia’s offensive cyber weapons, but also had to convince the intensely secretive Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) to grant unprecedented access to its personnel and its operations room. For TV, this was a story that had its challenges: cyber warriors work primarily in ones and zeros, not Technicolor. Probyn brought it to televisual life, with on-camera interviews with ASD officers, great graphics and the recreation of a vodka-soaked night out in Siberia.

Andrew Probyn has been a journalist in print and broadcast for three decades and is now national affairs editor for the Nine Network.

### JUDGES’ COMMENTS

Andrew Probyn has produced a rare cybercrime story — with life, colour and villains. When the details of millions of Medibank customers were hacked, he convinced employees at the secretive Australian Signals Directorate to open their doors and go on camera, putting together a watchable package that includes even a reconstructed vodka binge in Siberia.



## TELEVISION/VIDEO: CURRENT AFFAIRS SHORT (under 20 minutes)

Award Partner SBS

**Adele Ferguson, Chris Gillett, ABC, 7.30,**  
‘The Slap, childcare exposed’



No words can describe your reaction to a sickening video of a female childcare worker repeatedly slapping a crying baby on the face. This exclusive vision in the 7.30 report ‘The Slap, childcare exposed’, came after months of research and extremely sensitive development of sources.

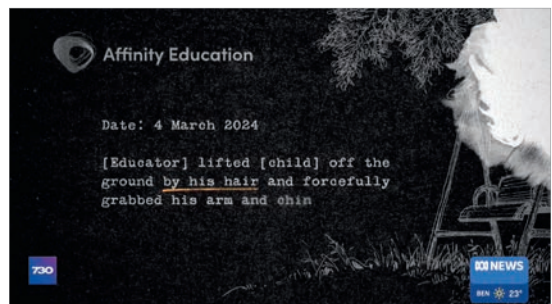
After the team’s initial *Four Corners* investigation, ‘Betrayal of trust’, aired on March 17, many childcare sources risked everything to speak out or provide damning footage. Some of the footage from one of Australia’s largest childcare operators, the private equity-owned Affinity Education, was used in this 7.30 episode, which aired on May 12.

The team also uncovered footage from an internal Affinity Education conference that offered a rare and disturbing glimpse into a cult-like corporate culture obsessed with financial performance over child safety. It sparked national outrage, dominated talkback radio and media headlines and propelled childcare onto the national media stage.

Adele Ferguson is a multi-award-winning investigative journalist and author with ABC Investigations. Chris Gillett is a multi-award-winning TV producer with ABC Investigations.

### JUDGES’ COMMENTS

A powerful investigation into systemic childcare regulation failures. It used confronting footage, damning evidence from former employees and previously hidden documents to expose physical assault, chronic understaffing and cost cutting. The story turned a harsh spotlight on wider industry issues and the national outcry over subsequent shocking abuse allegations sparked urgent action at state and federal levels.



**SBS congratulates the winners of the 70th Walkley Awards for Excellence in Journalism**  
Congratulations Adele Ferguson & Chris Gillett, ABC – winner of the Current Affairs Short Video Award

# TELEVISION/VIDEO: CURRENT AFFAIRS LONG (under 20 minutes)

Award Partner Pharmacy Guild of Australia

**Adele Ferguson, Chris Gillett, Ben Butler, Lara Sonnenschein, ABC, *Four Corners*, 'Betrayal of trust, Australia's childcare crisis'**



*Four Corners*' 'Betrayal of trust' was the first time the childcare sector had been dissected in detail. It found children were routinely left unsupervised and yanked, dragged and slapped. One centre left children in high chairs for six hours a day. It revealed one report of sexual misconduct is made in childcare every single day.

Rising injury rates, chronic understaffing, cost-cutting and falsified qualifications were all detailed. Some educators were working with expired Working With Children Checks. One had been charged in October 2024 with nine counts of child sexual abuse at a centre run by Affinity Education. As a result of this story, Affinity Education's worst-performing centre was suspended, and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) banned a provider featured in the program.

Adele Ferguson is a multi-award-winning journalist with ABC Investigations. Chris Gillett is a multi-award-winning TV producer with ABC Investigations. Ben Butler is an ABC investigative journalist and Lara Sonnenschein is a *Four Corners* researcher.

## JUDGES' COMMENTS

'Betrayal of trust' delivered the most comprehensive investigation ever undertaken into Australia's \$20 billion childcare industry. The program shattered the illusion that the childcare system is safe by exposing the scale of abuse and neglect. It exposed systemic failures and triggered a national reckoning.



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## ALL MEDIA: INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Award Partner Guardian Australia

**Adele Ferguson, Chris Gillett, Ben Butler, Lara Sonnenschein, ABC, *Four Corners*, 7.30, 'Betrayal of trust, Australia's childcare crisis', 'The Slap', 'Childcare training crisis'**



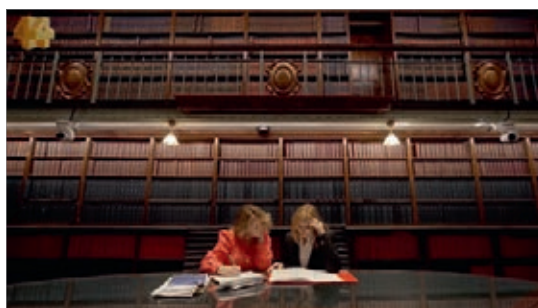
The *Four Corners* program 'Betrayal of Trust' was a comprehensive and unflinching investigation into Australia's heavily taxpayer-subsidised childcare industry. The team analysed court records and fragmented, often inaccessible, state and federal data, secured leaked internal documents, exclusive CCTV and mobile phone footage, and persuaded whistleblowers and insiders to speak — despite many being bound by gag orders or fearing professional repercussions.

The 7.30 reports 'The Slap' (May 12) and 'Childcare training crisis' (July 7) showed shocking footage and demonstrated how a profit-first model in childcare drives understaffing, underqualified educators, inadequate food and unsafe care.

Crucially, the overall investigation helped lay the groundwork for the Australian Federal Police to unmask an alleged paedophile, Joshua Brown, who had worked across more than 23 childcare centres.

### JUDGES' COMMENTS

This compelling investigation exposed the dysfunctional state of Australia's childcare sector. The reporting set the news agenda for months, intensifying debate about the cracks in the system. It included examples of abuse and official failures in oversight of the \$20 billion sector. It exposed the need for official action and laid bare for viewers the key policy failures, including a lack of oversight of centres and operators.



If facts are sacred,  
**journalism must  
be defended.**



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Congratulations to all 2025 winners and finalists.

**The  
Guardian**

# ALL MEDIA: INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISM

**Mark Willacy, Jonathan Miller, Ryan Sheridan**  
 – with **Tetiana Prytulenko** (Ukraine), ABC,  
*Four Corners*, ‘Endurance’



‘Endurance’ takes the viewer to the front lines of the Ukraine-Russia conflict. Producing it meant travelling into the killing fields themselves. At times, it took the team to within less than a kilometre of Russian positions, where they were exposed to constant bombardment. One sequence entailed spending a day with a Ukrainian killer drone unit in their underground bunker just across the Uda River from thousands of Russian combat troops. Tragically, since then, one of the four-man drone team who features in the film, Yuriy Felipenko, 32, was killed in a Russian drone strike outside the bunker they had visited.

‘Endurance’ captures the brutal reality of war in the 21st century and Vladimir Putin’s cold-blooded policy of using his troops in pointless ‘meat waves’.

The team secured big interviews with those helping to run the war in Kyiv, as well as those who have fought and suffered on the front line, and documented allegations of sickening war crimes. It is a story that takes the viewer from the war rooms of Kyiv to the muddy trenches and bunkers of the front line, and shows the true nature of the bloodiest conflict in Europe since World War II.

Mark Willacy is a Gold Walkley-winning journalist who has reported for the ABC in more than 40 countries. Jonathan Miller is an award-winning reporter with decades of international experience with the ABC and the UK’s Channel 4. Ryan Sheridan is a Walkley-winning camera operator with many years of international experience.

## JUDGES’ COMMENTS

An extraordinary, confronting and compelling piece of television. The team showed extraordinary courage in travelling so close to the front lines of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and found talent that gave some highly memorable quotes. Beautifully shot and expertly told, ‘Endurance’ gives insight into modern drone warfare that is as staggering as the Russian executions are brutal. This is a terrific entry that leaves the viewer highly informed and deeply disturbed.



## FEATURE/PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY

**Julian Kingma**, New South Publishing,  
‘The power of choice’



Nigel Taimanu chose to die using Queensland’s voluntary assisted dying (VAD) law a day after his 53rd birthday. The squamous cell carcinoma in his neck was getting so big it was breaking through the skin. It was also growing in his chest and eventually it would close off his oesophagus and

he would not be able to swallow or eat. Determined to take control, Taimanu said, “I don’t want to die that way and I don’t want my partner Kath or my friends to watch me die that way either.”

His last act was to throw a party, so everyone would be together and his mother and partner Kath would not be alone. Photographer Julian Kingma was shocked when his friend Nigel asked him to be there to take photos on his final day. In the end, his death was quick and peaceful. There was laughter and a lot of tears. There was also brutal honesty, Kingma said.

Kingma, whose work regularly appears in Canberra’s National Portrait Gallery, said he was “blown away by the courage, humour and generosity” he witnessed that day. Generosity because Nigel and Kath were adamant that Nigel’s story be told to demystify voluntary assisted dying, which is now legal in most states and territories.

### JUDGES’ COMMENTS

This essay on voluntary assisted dying treated a difficult subject with grace and respect, the result being intimate and dignified. Kingma captured the day by removing himself from the emotion, becoming a fly on the wall while in close proximity to the subject’s family and his death.

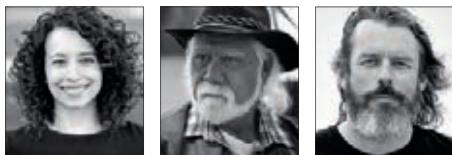
1. Nigel Taimanu, 53, with his partner Kath Keogh. “We know the next stage of this disease will be horrendous.”
2. “Everything we do today — having our morning coffee together, taking a shower — we know it’s the last time we will do that.”
3. “The ultimate goal is to stop the suffering of everyone involved.”
4. “All these people are not just here for me, they’re here for Mum and Kath as well.”
5. “Nothing left unsaid.”
6. “I’m scared shitless ... because I don’t know what comes next.”
7. “My lymph nodes are now so enlarged they’re breaking through the skin. They will eventually close off my oesophagus, so I won’t be able to swallow or eat.”
8. No coercion. “I don’t want to do this, but the cancer has forced my hand. No-one else, just the cancer and what it is doing to my body.”
9. “It is about stopping the suffering of everyone involved.”
10. “He was there and then he was gone.”
11. The aftermath.





## DOCUMENTARY AWARD

**Yaara Bou Melhem, Maitland Parker,  
Tom Bannigan and team, Illuminate  
Films, *Yurlu | Country***



*Yurlu | Country* is an intimate portrait of an Indigenous elder as he strives to heal his homeland — the largest contaminated site in the southern hemisphere from the Wittenoom asbestos mines in Western Australia — and himself, as he battles a terminal illness.

Banjima elder Maitland Parker chose to create, write and produce this film, documenting his final year, breaking with tradition to allow his voice, name and image to be used after his death, and allowing the camera to document the most private moments of his life. He nominated family members to help finish the film with director/producer Yaara Bou Melhem.

*Yurlu | Country* weaves together gentle scenes with Parker and visually arresting cinematic views of the Pilbara's ancient landscapes. Deep research into more than 60 years of parliamentary inquiries, restricted documents and casefiles from the lawyers for Wittenoom mine workers formed the bedrock of this film.

Rebuilding satellite imagery of the contamination zone using drone camera footage in an animated map showed how blue asbestos mining waste is like a cancerous growth on the stunning red gorges of the landscape, a metaphor for protagonist and co-creator Parker's own battle with mesothelioma.

Yaara Bou Melhem is a UN Media Peace and Walkley Award-winning filmmaker who makes social justice films through her impact-driven production company Illuminate Films. Maitland Parker is a writer and Banjima elder. Tom Bannigan is an award-winning cinematographer.

### JUDGES' COMMENTS

*Yurlu | Country* is a powerful, deeply personal meditation on the litany of violence that has been inflicted on the Banjima people and their land in the Pilbara, now contaminated by blue asbestos. Banjima Elder and co-writer Maitland Parker, with filmmaker Yaara Bou Melhem, takes us on a haunting journey, as he fights not only for his health but also for his homeland, which is accessible only in hazmat suits and masks. The film is an urgent call to action for justice for both the land and its people. It's a profoundly political and deeply poetic film.



# WALKLEY BOOK AWARD

Award Partner Bookoccino

## Rick Morton, *Mean Streak* (HarperCollins Publishers)



Robodebt was a debt-creation system used to illegally pursue close to half a million Australian welfare recipients for false debts, which were generated by the thousands. It was described by the Royal Commission's report into the system as a "massive failure of public administration" caused by "venality, incompetence and cowardice".

*Mean Streak* is the culmination of years of reporting by Rick Morton on the Robodebt Royal Commission. He read all of the commission's 10,000 public exhibits, spoke to senior public servants across the country and pieced together a narrative in the mode of a corporate thriller.

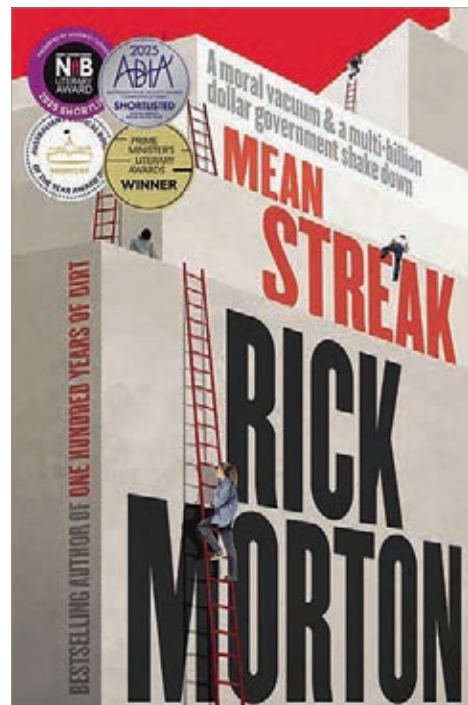
He found Australians were deceived by their own government, which doggedly and knowingly concocted a program that was both mathematically wrong and illegal, just to shake down innocent people for money, then lied about it for four-and-a-half years.

Described as the "Rosetta Stone" for deciphering this public policy disaster and the final Royal Commission report into it, *Mean Streak* is being used by the Australian Public Service Commission as the basis for a training module on integrity in the public service, according to Senate estimates.

Rick Morton is the author of four non-fiction books, including *One Hundred Years of Dirt*, which was long listed for the Walkley Book Award in 2018. He is the senior reporter with *The Saturday Paper* and the winner of two Walkley Awards for his coverage of the Robodebt Royal Commission.

### JUDGES' COMMENTS

*Mean Streak* is a riveting and detailed exposition of government power gone haywire and the hidden machinations of the public service. It shows how, in tandem, they can wreak havoc on ordinary Australians. Rick Morton, with passion and courage, has transformed a complex, behind-closed-doors scandal into a work of art, and a warning for future governance.



## Congratulations to the winner of the 2025 Walkley Book Award, **Rick Morton, *Mean Streak***

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## OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO JOURNALISM

Award Partner Media Super

### Peter Manning

He has been described by peers as “a colossus of Australian investigative journalism”, a “fierce and loyal protector of journalists” and “the best boss I ever had” for his “attention, care and infectious enthusiasm.” The Walkley directors voted unanimously, and 16 of the nation’s leading journalists gave testimonials honouring Peter Manning, for his outstanding contribution to journalism for over 60 years.

Manning joined the groundbreaking ABC daily current affairs program, *This Day Tonight (TDT)* in 1971, after a cadetship at *The Sydney Morning Herald* and two years writing features at *The Bulletin* magazine. He returned to print for a few years for another stint as a senior writer at *The Bulletin*, before being appointed managing editor of *Nation Review* in 1975. In the same year, he published his first book, *Green Bans: The Story of an Australian Phenomenon*.

Manning returned to the ABC in 1979, first as a senior producer with *TDT*’s replacement program, *Nationwide*, then to spearhead the rejuvenation of *Four Corners* when the program was facing the axe.

Under his courageous and visionary leadership, *Four Corners* enjoyed a golden age from 1985 to 1989. While he was *Four Corners* executive producer he commissioned high-impact investigations that won a slew of awards. These included the Gold Walkley in 1985, when Chris Masters and Bruce Belsham won for ‘French Connections’, which identified the French intelligence agents behind the sinking of the Greenpeace protest ship *Rainbow Warrior*.

In 1986, David Marr and Alan Hall won the Walkley Award for Best TV Current Affairs for a report on the death of Aboriginal people in police custody, forcing a royal commission. In 1987, Tony Jones won a Walkley for Best Television Current Affairs Report for an investigation into the Waterhouse racing dynasty. Manning was the driving force behind Chris Masters’ groundbreaking 1987 program, ‘The Moonlight State’, which exposed institutional corruption under Queensland premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen that led to the Fitzgerald inquiry and the jailing of the Queensland police commissioner Terry Lewis.

With Manning at the helm, *Four Corners* won the Logie for Most Outstanding Achievement in Public Affairs in both 1988 and 1989, and Paul Barry’s program ‘Blue Death’, which exposed the dangers of blue asbestos mining in Wittenoom, won the Human Rights Award for Television Documentary in 1988.

As head of ABC News and Current Affairs from 1989 until 1993, Manning created new programs such as *Lateline* (which ran for 27 years), *Foreign Correspondent* (now 33 years strong) and *Landline* (now 34 years old). He also commissioned the Gold Walkley and Logie-winning series *Labor in Power* on the Hawke-Keating years. This became the template for follow-up series such as *The Killing Season* on the Rudd-Gillard years. As head of Radio National, he launched the breakfast news program, *Radio National Breakfast*, that is still going 30 years later. He launched the ABC’s multimedia unit in 1995, overseeing its first online output.



In 1996, he became the founding executive producer of the Seven Network’s quality investigative program *Witness*, hosted by Jana Wendt and later by Paul Barry.

From 2001 to 2009, Manning was adjunct professor, then senior lecturer in journalism at UTS, where he nurtured a generation of students, many now working in high-profile media posts. His book, *Us and Them: A Journalist’s Investigation of Media, Muslims and the Middle East*, examined the news coverage of Muslims in Australia from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to the Israel/Palestine conflict, and from asylum seekers to the Cronulla riots. From 2009 until 2012, Manning was senior lecturer in journalism at Monash University. UTS awarded him a PhD in 2014, after which he returned there as a visiting fellow/professor in the School of Communication. Manning also gave some of the biggest names in news television their first break, including Stan Grant, Marian Wilkinson, Sue Spencer, Tony Jones, Deb Whitmont and Paul Barry.



**“I saw him at work close up. His leadership from the front was inspirational and he commanded great loyalty from a rather fractious group of journalists.”**

Kerry O’Brien, six-time Walkley-winning journalist, including the Gold Walkley in 1982.

**“I was impressed by Peter’s ability to inspire and enthuse, but not interfere or micro-manage. He was the best boss I worked for.”**

Jonathan Holmes, former host of *Media Watch* and executive producer of *Four Corners*.

**“Peter, having tuned his famous over-the-horizon radar, sent me to Auckland, New Zealand when a bomb exploded sinking the Greenpeace flagship ‘Rainbow Warrior’. A month later we broke an international, Gold Walkley winning exclusive report ... We all owe Peter.”**

Chris Masters, five-time Walkley-winning journalist including the Gold Walkley in 1985, and best-selling author.

**“From the sustained attack on the ABC over its coverage of the first Gulf War in 1991, to the 1993 controversy over backdoor sponsorship, Peter has fought for the ABC’s independence and integrity.”**

Monica Attard, five-time Walkley winner, professor and Head of Journalism, UTS.

**“If Peter has a watchword, I think it would be integrity. He was not to be bought or sold. He did not buckle, sometimes at real risk to promotion or his career. He nailed his colours to the mast and backed his troops. Many a piece of investigative journalism might have ended up on the cutting room floor without his stout advocacy.”**

Mike Carlton, author, journalist and former *TDT* colleague.

**“I was not the only ‘outsider’ Peter championed and there are many more like me today. Aboriginal people report in our overseas bureaux and host our news programs ... Peter did not wait for the future of journalism, he created it. I owe him a big debt.”**

Stan Grant, journalist and author, and three-time Walkley Award winner.

**“Peter was one of the most courageous editors I have worked for and encouraged his reporters to dig deep and question everything.”**

Marian Wilkinson, former *Four Corners* journalist and two-time Walkley Award winner.

**“The work of the ABC’s news and current affairs teams has been central to helping Australians understand their nation since the 1930s. In that time, there have been few more significant leaders of news operations than Peter Manning.”**

Mark Scott, former ABC managing director (2006-16), vice-chancellor of the University of Sydney.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL FINALISTS AND WINNERS.**

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## 70th WALKLEY AWARD FINALISTS

### PRINT/TEXT NEWS REPORT

- Eryk Bagshaw, Bianca Hrovat, Clare Sibthorpe, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age* and *Good Food*, 'The sinister side of the glitzy hospitality scene'
- Herald Sun/News Corp Australia Team, *Herald Sun*, 'Please help us: Laos backpacker poisoning'
- Max Mason, Kate McClymont, Nick McKenzie, *The Australian Financial Review*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, 'UnWise: the Richard White scandal'

### FEATURE WRITING SHORT (UNDER 4000 WORDS)

Award Partner The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age

- Melissa Fyfe, *Good Weekend Magazine*, 'Wedlocked'
- Myriam Robin, *The Australian Financial Review Magazine*, 'Trip hazard: Julie Bishop's post-parliamentary career'
- Will Swanton, *The Weekend Australian*, 'Legendary Lex and the Real Paralympics'

### FEATURE WRITING LONG (OVER 4000 WORDS)

- Melissa Fyfe, *Good Weekend Magazine*, 'Lidia Thorpe: The fire inside'
- Primrose Riordan, Lisa Murray, *The Australian Financial Review*, 'The power of one: Inside Forrest's Fortescue'
- Jackson Ryan, freelance, *The Monthly*, 'The Sun also revises'

### ALL MEDIA: COMMENTARY, ANALYSIS, OPINION AND CRITIQUE

Award Partner Thomson Geer Lawyers

- Bridget Brennan, ABC, *ABC News* online, 'The neo-Nazi heckling at Melbourne's ANZAC Day echoes our past pain'
- John Lyons, ABC, *ABC News* online, 'The ghost of Jeffrey Epstein is haunting the world's most powerful men'
- The Media Watch Team, ABC, *Media Watch*, 'Nine's beach house porkies', 'ABC Radio chairbound', 'Conflict class'

### ALL MEDIA: EXPLANATORY JOURNALISM

- The Conversation Digital Storytelling Team, *The Conversation Australia* and *New Zealand*, 'Can you spot a rip?'
- Lucy King, Joshua Peach, Fiona Buffini, Bryan Cook, *The Australian Financial Review*, 'Inside Australia's \$11b charity stockpile'
- The Media Watch Team, ABC, *Media Watch*, 'Reins of power'

### ALL MEDIA: COVERAGE OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Award Partner National Indigenous Times

- Matt Garrick, Jack Hislop, ABC, *ABC News* online, 'The truth inside NT watch houses'
- Guardian Australia's Indigenous Affairs Team, *Guardian Australia*, 'The Descendants'
- Christopher Knaus, Ariel Bogle, *Guardian Australia*, 'Fatal inaction'

### ALL MEDIA: COVERAGE OF COMMUNITY & REGIONAL AFFAIRS

Award Partner BHP

- Kallee Buchanan, Craig Dixon, ABC, *ABC News*, *Queensland Country Hour*, 'When dams fail, people die: Finding the flaw in Paradise that puts thousands at risk'
- Rebecca Symons, Danielle Pope, ABC Gippsland, *ABC News* online, ABC TV News, 'Families break silence on deaths and trauma at Latrobe Regional Hospital'
- Joanna Woodburn, Hannah Meagher, Fred Shaw, Shaun Kingma, ABC, ABC 7.30, *ABC News*, 'Whistleblower doctors expose cancer surgery'

### ALL MEDIA: CARTOON OF THE YEAR

- Warren Brown, *The Daily Telegraph*, 'Farmer wants a wife...'
- Alan Moir, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Scalpel'
- David Pope, *The Canberra Times*, 'Gaza'

### ALL MEDIA: SPORTS JOURNALISM

Award Partner University of Queensland

- Kathryn Diss, Paul Waterhouse, Bernadette Murray, ABC, *Foreign Correspondent*, *ABC News* online, ABC Instagram and TikTok, 'More than a kiss'
- Jessica Halloran, Stephen Rice, *The Australian*, 'Predator in the vault'
- Andrew Webster, *The Australian*, 'The Power and the pettiness: how Phil Gould imposes his will on rugby league'

### SPORT PHOTOGRAPHY

- Robert Cianfone, Getty Images, 'Decisions, decisions'
- David Gray, Agence France-Presse, 'Sporting moments'
- Quinn Rooney, Getty Images, 'The spectacle of sport'

### AUDIO SHORT (UNDER 20 MINUTES)

Award Partner ABC

- Lucy Barbour, ABC, *AM*, *ABC News*, 'Australia's "unspoken" abortion ban'
- Claudianna Blanco, The Briefing podcast, *LiSTNR*, 'The baby trade: Inside Colombia's surrogacy marketplace'
- Allyson Horn, ABC, *AM*, *ABC News*, 'Israel-Iran war'

### AUDIO LONG (OVER 20 MINUTES)

- Anne Connolly and the Background Briefing team, ABC, *Background Briefing*, 'The invisible killer'
- Gina: Power, Privilege and Influence team, *Guardian Australia*, 'Gina: Power, privilege and influence'
- Secrets We Keep: By Any Means team, *LiSTNR*, 'Secrets we keep: By any means'

### DIGITAL MEDIA: INNOVATION JOURNALISM

Award Partner Master Builders Australia

- Badiucuo, Matthew Absalom-Wong, Patrick O'Neil, Tom McKendrick, *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Watched, followed, threatened. Now an impostor is claiming to be me'
- The Descendants team, *Guardian Australia*, 'The killing code'
- Matt Martino, Devi Mallal, ABC, *ABC News Verify*, 'Can a fake Jacqui Lambie voice fool Tasmanians?'

### ALL MEDIA: SCOOP OF THE YEAR

Award Partner The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age

- Adele Ferguson, Chris Gillett, Ben Butler, ABC, *ABC News* online, ABC 7.30, 'Betrayal of trust, Australia's childcare crisis'
- Robyn Riley, *Herald Sun*, 'Mum gives birth to the wrong baby'
- Linda Silmalis, James O'Doherty, Madeleine Bower, *The Sunday Telegraph*, *The Daily Telegraph*, 'Rorts and rides: The downfall of a minister'

### ALL MEDIA: COVERAGE OF A MAJOR NEWS EVENT OR ISSUE

- ABC News South Australia team, *ABC News*, ABC TV, 'South Australian algal bloom ecological disaster'
- The Age Mushroom Trial team, *The Age*, 'The mushroom case: A family meal and a courtroom drama'
- Adele Ferguson, Chris Gillett, Ben Butler, ABC, 7.30, *ABC News* online, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Betrayal of trust, Australia's childcare crisis'

## NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY

- Alex Coppel, *Herald Sun*, 'Tony Mokbel walks free'
- Martin Keep, Agence France-Presse, 'Erin Patterson'
- Jake Nowakowski, *Herald Sun*, 'Land forces'

## ALL MEDIA: SPECIALIST AND BEAT REPORTING

- Kate Aubusson, Aisha Dow, Emily Kaine, *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Medical misogyny investigation'
- Lucy Barbour, Lucy Sweeney, *ABC News*, 'The "unspoken ban" on abortion'
- Liam Mannix, William Davis, *The Age*, 'Follow the mice'

## ALL MEDIA: BUSINESS JOURNALISM

Award Partner ING Australia

- Neil Chenoweth, Mark Di Stefano, *The Australian Financial Review*, 'The downfall of MinRes and Chris Ellison'
- Sarah Danckert, Carla Jaeger, *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Cash for the boys – the downfall of Dubber Ltd'
- Angus Grigg, Neil Chenoweth, Kyle Taylor, *ABC Four Corners*, *ABC News* online, 'No Return'

## FEATURE/PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY

- Flavio Brancaleone, freelance, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, AAP, 'Between two popes: A Vatican transition'
- Christopher Hopkins, freelance, Al Jazeera, 'They teach us to sing'
- Julian Kingma, New South Publishing, 'The power of choice'

## TELEVISION/VIDEO: CAMERAWORK

- Tim Noonan, freelance, SBS, 'Hunt for truth: Tasmanian tiger'
- Sissy Reyes, ABC, *Four Corners*, *ABC News*, 'Body of work'
- Ryan Sheridan, ABC, *Four Corners*, 'Endurance'

## TELEVISION/VIDEO: NEWS REPORTING

Award Partner Seven

- Kathryn Diss, Fletcher Yeung, ABC, ABC TV, YouTube, 'Russia becomes the invaded'
- Lia Harris, ABC, *ABC News*, 'Toxic cops: Exposing the dangerous culture within the nation's largest police force'
- Andrew Probyn, Nine, *Nine News*, 'Russian gangsters and the Medibank hack'

## TELEVISION/VIDEO: CURRENT AFFAIRS SHORT (UNDER 20 MINUTES)

Award Partner SBS

- Kathryn Diss, Fletcher Yeung, ABC, ABC TV, YouTube, 'Russia becomes the invade'
- Michelle Elias, Scobie McKay, Jack Tulleners, Jodie Noyce, SBS, *The Feed*, 'The group tearing down Australia's colonial statues'
- Adele Ferguson, Chris Gillett, ABC, 7.30, 'The Slap, childcare exposed'

## TELEVISION/VIDEO: CURRENT AFFAIRS LONG (OVER 20 MINUTES)

Award Partner The Pharmacy Guild of Australia

- Adele Ferguson, Chris Gillett, Ben Butler, Lara Sonnenschein, ABC, *Four Corners*, 'Betrayal of Trust'
- Nick McKenzie, Amelia Ballinger, Nine, *60 Minutes*, 'Taken for a ride'
- Mark Willacy, Jonathan Miller, Ryan Sheridan, ABC, *Four Corners*, 'Endurance'

## ALL MEDIA: INTERNATIONAL

- John Lyons, Ron Foley, Alex McDonald – with Dergham Dergham (Lebanon) and Ariel Tagar (Israel), ABC, *Four Corners*, 'The big war'
- Stephanie March, Ron Foley, Jonathan Miller, Micah McGown – with Maradia Tsaava Gabriella Lagidze (Georgia), ABC, *Foreign Correspondent*, 'Russia's shadow'
- Mark Willacy, Jonathan Miller, Ryan Sheridan – with Tetiana Prytulenko (Ukraine), ABC, *Four Corners*, 'Endurance'

## ALL MEDIA: INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Award Partner Guardian Australia

- Adele Ferguson, Chris Gillett, Ben Butler, Lara Sonnenschein, ABC, *Four Corners*, 7.30, 'Betrayal of Trust, Australia's childcare crisis'
- Nick McKenzie, Amelia Ballinger, Serge Negus, Nine, *60 Minutes*, 'Building bad'
- Calliste Weitenberg, Agnes Teek, Simon Phegan, Gavin Blyth, SBS, *Dateline*, 'The cost of doing business'

## WALKLEY DOCUMENTARY AWARD FINALISTS

- Yaara Bou Melhem, Maitland Parker and team, *Yurlu | Country*, Illuminate Films
- Antony Loewenstein and team, *The Palestine Laboratory*, Al Jazeera English, Black Leaf Films
- Wild Pacific Media team, *The Kimberley*, ABC

## WALKLEY BOOK AWARD SHORTLIST

Award Partner Bookkocchino

- Joe Aston, *The Chairman's Lounge* (Simon & Schuster)
- Rick Morton, *Mean Streak* (HarperCollins Publishers)
- Clare Wright, *Naku Dharuk The Bark Petitions: How the People of Yirrkala Changed the Course of Australian Democracy* (Text Publishing)

## NIKON-WALKLEY PRESS PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

Award Partner Nikon

- Jason Edwards, *Herald Sun*, 'Moments'
- Christopher Hopkins, freelance, Al Jazeera, *The Age*, *The Guardian*, '2024/25 Folio'
- Steven Siewert, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Sydney looking glass'

## NIKON PHOTO OF THE YEAR PRIZE



### **Martin Keep**, Agence France-Presse, ‘Erin Patterson’



The Nikon Photo of the Year is chosen from all the images entered in the Walkley Awards for Excellence in Photojournalism. The 2025 prize-winning shot by Martin Keep, ‘Erin Patterson’, is part of a series entered in the News Photography category. These images were taken in May 2025 when Erin Patterson arrived in a prison transport vehicle at Latrobe Valley Magistrates’ Court in Morwell, Victoria, but were not released until after her convictions for the murder of three relatives and the attempted murder of another.

This unique series was sold around the world within minutes.

The judges recognised the photographer’s perseverance and resourcefulness in setting up a custom-built camera rig to get as much light as possible into the window of the dark, moving prison transport vehicle, an extremely hard-to-shoot location. Keep then waited outside the court for a number of days to seize his moment. Significant thought and preparation went into achieving this series of shots.

Martin Keep is a Melbourne-based freelance photographer who covers news and sport for Agence France-Presse.

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Erin Patterson arrives in the back of a prison transport vehicle at Latrobe Valley Magistrates’ Court in Morwell, Victoria, on May 12 2025. The keen home cook had hosted an intimate meal in July 2023 that started with good-natured banter and earnest prayer – but ended with three guests dead. On July 7, at the climax of a Supreme Court trial watched around the world, a jury found Patterson guilty of murdering her husband’s parents and aunt by lacing their Beef Wellington lunch with toxic mushrooms, and of the attempted murder of another relative.

## NIKON PORTRAIT PRIZE



### Carly Earl, *The Guardian*, 'Riley on the Roma Southern Road'



The story of drovers in the Australian outback has an obvious visual pull, with sweeping landscapes, beautiful sunsets and great light. What you don't see is the extreme conditions they face every day and the challenges the photographer must overcome just to keep up with them.

Many isolated jobs draw characters who seek a solitary existence, and it took time for Carly Earl to gain the drovers' trust. Only then could she shoot freely without having them actively avoid her. The riders are often in direct sun for eight hours a day with little respite. They eat, drink and work on the move, so the only times they could be photographed standing still were at 5am, when they were saddling up, or at dusk, when they were packing down.

Using photography as a vehicle for beautiful rural stories is rare, mostly because of the difficulties of access and the costs involved. Yet the narratives that come from the rural outback are a reminder of a way of life that contrasts starkly with that of the majority of Australia's population.

The judges said this was a beautifully framed shot with a real depth of field. "The many layers of this striking image really tell a story."

Carly Earl, a picture editor and senior photojournalist with *The Guardian* Australia, is known for creating striking portraits and documenting the stories of the 'voiceless' in an ever-changing media landscape.



# Over 40 years of Gold Walkley winners

The Gold Walkley has been awarded since 1978 and is recognised as the pinnacle of journalistic achievement

1978	Catherine Martin, <i>The West Australian</i>	2004	Neil Chenoweth, Shraga Elam, Colleen Ryan, Andrew Main and Rosemarie Graffagnini, <i>The Australian Financial Review</i>
1979	Ron Tandberg, <i>The Age</i>	2005	Tim Palmer, ABC TV
1980	Leslie Grant Heading, ABC TV Hobart	2006	Liz Jackson, Lin Buckfield and Peter Cronau, <i>Four Corners</i> , ABC TV
1981	John Lewis, <i>The Newcastle Herald</i>	2007	Hedley Thomas, <i>The Australian</i>
1982	Kerry O'Brien, ATN Channel 7	2008	Ross Coulthart and Nick Farrow, <i>Sunday</i>
1983	Mary Delahunty and Alan Hall, <i>Four Corners</i> , ABC TV	2009	Gary Hughes, <i>The Australian</i>
1984	Jan Mayman, freelance	2010	Laurie Oakes, Nine Network
1985	Chris Masters and Bruce Belsham, <i>Four Corners</i> , ABC TV	2011	Sarah Ferguson, Michael Doyle and Anne Worthington, <i>Four Corners</i> , ABC TV
1986	Ron Tandberg, <i>The Age</i>	2012	Steve Pennells, <i>The West Australian</i>
1987	Phil Dickie, <i>The Courier-Mail</i>	2013	Joanne McCarthy, <i>The Newcastle Herald</i>
1988	Norman Swan, ABC TV	2014	Adele Ferguson, Deb Masters and Mario Christodoulou, <i>Four Corners</i> and Fairfax Media
1989	Alan Tate and Paul Bailey, <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	2015	Caro Meldrum-Hanna, Sam Clark and Max Murch, <i>Four Corners</i> , ABC TV
1990	Janet Hawley, <i>Good Weekend</i>	2016	Andrew Quilty, freelance / <i>Foreign Policy</i>
1991	Monica Attard, ABC Radio	2017	Michael Bachelard and Kate Geraghty, Fairfax Media
1992	Jenny Brockie, ABC TV	2018	Hedley Thomas and Slade Gibson, <i>The Australian</i>
1993	Phillip Chubb and Sue Spencer, ABC TV	2019	Anthony Dowsley and Patrick Carlyon, <i>Herald Sun</i>
1994	Peter McEvoy, ABC Radio National	2020	Mark Willacy and the ABC TV Investigations- <i>Four Corners</i> Team
1995	David Bentley, <i>The Courier-Mail</i>	2021	Samantha Maiden, news.com.au
1996	Peter Hartcher, <i>The Australian Financial Review</i>	2022	Anne Connolly, Ali Russell and Stephanie Zillman, ABC <i>Four Corners</i>
1997	Mary-Louise O'Callaghan, <i>The Australian</i>	2023	Neil Chenoweth and Edmund Tadros, <i>The Australian Financial Review</i>
1998	Pamela Williams, <i>The Australian Financial Review</i>	2024	Building Bad team - <i>The Age</i> , <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> , <i>Australian Financial Review</i> and <i>60 Minutes</i> , Nine
1999	Richard Ackland, Deborah Richards and Anne Connolly, <i>Media Watch</i> , ABC TV	2025	Adele Ferguson and Chris Gillett, ABC, <i>Four Corners</i> , 7.30, ABC News online
2000	Mark Davis, <i>Dateline</i> , SBS TV		
2001	Andrew Rule, <i>The Age</i>		
2002	Anne Davies and Kate McClymont, <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>		
2003	Richard Moran, <i>National Nine News</i>		