The Walkley Foundation

CELEBRATING AND SUPPORTING GREAT AUSTRALIAN JOURNALISM

All the 2026 winners and finalists inside

Yearbook 2026



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 that come together collaboratively to support the Walkley Foundation.

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Winners at the 2025 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 the wider community. We champion the role of journalism in society by promoting awareness of the craft, raising the profiles of journalists and their work, and publicly 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
- Mentoring

Supporting and valuing journalism

- Sean Dorney Grant for Pacific Journalism
- Freelance Journalism Grants

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

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Aid the next generation of journalists now

Your donation, no matter how small, can help fund the 2027 Opportunity Scholarships.
Go to **www.walkleys.com/donate**

The Walkley Gift Fund

The Walkleys remain as important as ever

Shona Martyn, CEO, Walkley Foundation

In 2026 we celebrate the 71st Walkley Awards. These prestigious prizes were first presented in 1956, coincidentally the year that television was introduced in Australia.

Since then, the Walkleys have expanded in size and form. They have mirrored changes in the news media, such as the evolution of new platforms and the changing patterns in the consumption of news. More recently, we have witnessed the rise of cross-platform journalism and, in our troubled world, the unfortunate phenomenon of news avoidance. Amid these changes, the Walkley Awards remain as important as ever in recognising truth, integrity and the highest standards of public interest journalism.

Like the world of journalism that they serve, it is inevitable that the Walkley Awards need to evolve. To this end, we are about to launch our five-yearly review of Walkley categories. That means the 71st Walkleys are the last with the current line-up. Next year, there are sure to be some new categories to make the awards fit for purpose and relevant today. All journalists and news organisations are invited to contribute to our review in the coming months. Get your two cents' worth in now.

Winning a Walkley is a career-changing moment. Even a finalist listing boosts a person's LinkedIn profile or CV. Like the Pulitzer Prizes in the US, the Walkley Awards are a benchmark of excellence in journalism. This year, we received more than 1050 entries, many from multi-person teams, an increase in participation since 2025.

But the work of the Walkley Foundation is not all about prizes. The Foundation also supports excellence through its professional development, grants and mentoring programs.

Highlights this year included a new partnership with McKinnon that supported a bootcamp for non-finance journalists who wanted to hone their budget reporting skills; a second iteration of the Masters & McKenzie Investigative Journalism Fellowship, funded by a philanthropic donation through the Australian Communities Fund; and the return of the popular Australia-Korea Media Exchange Program, supported by DFAT and the Korea Press Foundation, which was in hiatus last year.

This year, philanthropic donations to the Walkley Foundation also funded a fourth year of the Opportunity Scholarships, the hugely impactful Jacoby-Walkley Scholarship with Nine, plus two grants under the auspices of the Sean Dorney Grant for Pacific Journalism and, of course, the John B Fairfax Family Young Australian Journalist of the Year Awards, supported by the Jibb Foundation.



Shona Martyn at the 2025 Walkley Awards.
PHOTO: ADAM HOLLINGWORTH

This year's overall winner of the Young Journalist Award was crime reporter Riley Walter of *The Sydney Morning Herald* for a portfolio of scoops described by the judges as "tremendous work". Riley will travel to the UK in early 2027 for a two-week professional development trip.

Donations also allowed the Foundation to offer a round of freelance journalism grants totalling $120,000. Fourteen projects were chosen, examining subjects as broad as democratic accountability, environmental change, resource extraction and regional and community resilience.

As a not-for-profit organisation, the Walkley Foundation relies on donors and sponsors to fund its mission. I would like to thank them all for their support, as well as the legion of journalists who serve as directors and committee members, Judging Board members, judges, mentors and advisers.

As I am stepping down as CEO in the new year, I would particularly like to pay tribute to the small but mighty team at the Walkley Foundation for their brilliant work. It has been a privilege working alongside all our supporters over the past five years. I look forward to watching the next chapter of the Walkley Foundation and the Walkley Awards. •

Journalists' crucial responsibility



Gay Alcorn, Walkley Judging Board chair



PHOTO: ADAM HOLLINGWORTH

Many awards honour excellence in journalism, but the Walkleys stand apart. The buzz around the newsroom when finalists are announced, the thrill of a nomination, and the barely concealed disappointment if you've missed out (I've been there). The Walkleys have a singular credibility because of a process more rigorous than many others. They are a true signal that the work you have sweated on is recognised by your peers as outstanding, as making a contribution in your field.

This is my first year as chair of the Judging Board, and it was an honour to gather with 15 other judges to choose the winners and the Gold Walkley recipient. I always leave judging day feeling good about my profession, knowing that, despite the huge challenges facing our industry, journalists keep digging and challenging and illuminating and celebrating the world we live in.

And what a world we live in. Celebrating good journalism is important; recognising our responsibility – day in, day out – is crucial. The horrific alleged attack on Independent MP Helen Haines in October was a watershed for the country, or should be. It prompted a long-overdue reflection on the way we debate contentious issues in our liberal democracy, the consequences of social media algorithms that reward extreme views and an increasingly fractured and angry citizenry.

The call for a return to greater civility and restraint in public debate is a fine sentiment, but we will all need to work out how to do it. That has relevance to the media, too, and not just as fringe players.

We need to report the world as it is, not as we would like it to be, but we can be cognisant of the consequences of focusing on conflict over possible solutions, and of black and white coverage rather than reporting the complexity of challenges we face. Just as the Bondi massacre on 14 December last year led us to fully acknowledge and reflect on the rise of antisemitism in Australia, so the horror of the Haines attack should make us all think deeply about what we can do to defend our liberal democracy.

Because that is what this is about. Liberal democracies across the world are declining or at least under pressure. A report this year showed that just 7 per cent of the world's population live in a liberal democracy which upholds such principles as fair elections, protection of civil liberties and equality before the law.

You can't have a liberal democracy without a free media. If people only read or watch what they agree with, that's a danger. If we highlight conflict for clicks, that has a downside. If more of us get our information from unreliable social media, that weakens the fabric of our democracy. This is our challenge in coming years.

The Walkley Awards play a role in recognising the best of journalism. There were more than 1050 entries this year, and I wish to thank the 87 first round judges who got together to choose the three finalists in each category. We have three integrity observers – Narelle Hooper, Sarah Curnow and Virginia Moncrieff – who ensure that entries chosen as finalists comply with the awards' terms and conditions. Once finalists are chosen, the 16-member judging board decides the winners and the Gold Walkley. The standard this year was exceptionally high; in many categories, it was difficult to choose a winner. I want to thank Margie Smithurst, senior manager of the Foundation's awards, without whom the Walkleys would never run so smoothly.

Finally, I wish to thank the CEO of the Walkley Foundation, Shona Martyn, who is stepping down early next year after five years in the job. Shona is a true professional – always calm, thinking ahead, with a deep commitment to high-quality journalism. We will miss her. •

Excellence cannot thrive without a free press

Michael Slezak, federal president (media), MEAA



Michael Slezak says individual journalists must work together to defend press freedom. SUPPLIED: MEDIA DIVERSITY AUSTRALIA

The work celebrated in these pages is the best argument for press freedom there is. Excellence like this cannot thrive without a free press.

It's also a reminder of who has to defend press freedom.

For nearly two years, since I became federal president of the media section of MEAA, I've argued publicly that it must be working journalists who take up the fight to protect press freedom.

In particular, I've said it cannot be left to media bosses to take up that fight, since all too often it's a fight we take up against media bosses who impose their own ideological bent on news or bow to inappropriate external pressure.

MEAA members know this all too well. Most recently, we fought alongside Antoinette Lattouf for the best part of two years until it was established in court the ABC unlawfully sacked her to appease pro-Israel lobbyists.

Given this long-standing position, it should have come as no surprise to see my byline on an opinion piece in *The Australian Financial Review*, responding to a lobby group calling for journalists to lose access to information on the ASIC company register we use every day to scrutinise company directors.

Each year, Walkley winners rely on that very information. Last year, Neil Chenoweth and Mark Di Stefano's 'The downfall of MinRes and Chris Ellison' was one such winner.

For two years I've made these public comments under an agreement with my employer, the ABC, that allowed me to make public comment without prior approval. (Can you imagine a union where its president was not allowed to advocate for members without a boss's approval?)

So you can understand my surprise when I was told my publishing the piece could have breached my employment conditions at the national broadcaster. Was I about to be sacked by a news boss for defending press freedom?

Outraged union members around the country began to organise. Meetings were called. Posters were put up. Union 'press freedom' shirts were ironed. Hundreds of ABC journalists began signing an open letter.

Amid all that, the ABC backed down – for now. Thanks to that collective effort, we may never know if I was about to be 'Lattoufed'. But this sorry affair proves the point I've been arguing for nearly two years: Only working journalists, acting collectively, can protect press freedom.

It turns out media bosses will not only abrogate their role in that effort, but they will undermine the work of journalists who pick it up unless those journalists stand together.

And today our obligation as working journalists to take up this fight is clearer than it's been for a long time.

Politicians from across the spectrum are now choosing which journalists get to ask them questions. At the Pacific Islands Forum in Honiara last year, the Prime Minister's team locked Pacific journalists out of his press conference, claiming it was for Australian media only. This year, One Nation has barred ABC and *Guardian Australia* reporters from its events.

We've seen glimpses of the right response. When a *Guardian Australia* reporter was excluded from a One Nation event, a journalist from a competing outlet carried her recorder in for her.

In the US, when the Pentagon required reporters to sign an agreement that treated ordinary journalistic work as a security risk, journalists from nearly every major outlet walked out together. Journalists here may need to do something similar. When a politician bans one of us from a press conference, the rest of us must ask: Should we be walking in without them?

So, as press freedom is attacked by corporate lobby groups trying to limit our access to information, by media bosses appeasing lobbyists, or by political parties limiting access to press conferences, journalists must organise collectively to uphold our ability to deliver on the public's right to know.

If one of us is threatened by a boss for upholding press freedom, we must stand together. If one of us is excluded from a press conference, we must stand together.

Press freedom – like the democracy that depends on it – is too important leave to anyone else. •


WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER
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2026 GOLD WALKLEY

Award Partner MEAA

Nick McKenzie, *The Age*, *60 Minutes*



Nick McKenzie wins the 2026 Gold Walkley for his investigation into Victorian underworld figure Mick Gatto, and how the state's Labor government allowed wrongdoing to occur with impunity on its $100 billion signature infrastructure program, Big Build. The judges praised McKenzie's tenacity in the face of serious threats to his family, and the massive impact of these stories, which were instrumental in toppling Premier Jacinta Allan and prompting a royal commission into corruption.

McKenzie also won the Investigative Journalism category for his entry comprising three stories. First, an investigation for *The Age* revealed that the underworld was still profiting from taxpayer-funded projects. McKenzie secured leaked financial records from inside Mick Gatto's network to show a money trail from Big Build via connections in the CFMEU.

Next, McKenzie revealed that labour-hire company Women in Construction, which supplied workers on state and federally funded projects as part of Labor's Big Build, was owned and managed by men accused of family violence and with links to bikies and violent criminals. McKenzie's third submission, a *60 Minutes* program broadcast in October 2025, showed issues continued within the CFMEU despite Labor's promised clean-up.

Under pressure and anticipating an expected leadership challenge, Jacinta Allan resigned as premier in late July 2026, succeeded by deputy premier Ben Carroll. Carroll's first act as premier was to call a royal commission into corruption in Victoria's construction sector.

Nick McKenzie is an investigative reporter for *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *60 Minutes*. His wins this year (including the 2026 Walkley for Investigative Journalism for this story) bring his collection to 18 Walkleys, including the 2024 Gold Walkley as part of the Building Bad team. He was also recognised alongside Chris Masters in 2023 for the one-off Walkley Honour for Media Freedom, for their sustained reporting on Ben Roberts-Smith.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

For public impact, Nick McKenzie's work must win the Gold. This is truth-to-power journalism, in the face of attempts to shut him down with actual violence. It's not just a Victorian story, it speaks to our nation and the way our democracy works. He called bullshit on the government and backed it up. It's tenacious reporting presented in accessible ways, instrumental in bringing down a government. This will be spoken of for years.



Gatto still getting cut of taxpayers' Big Build cash

EXCLUSIVE
Nick McKenzie, Lachlan Abbott

BUILDING BAD

BIG BUILD BOSS VOUCHED FOR CRIMINAL
REPORT PAGE 6

A two-year attempted clean-up of Victoria's Big Build has failed to stop large sums of money flowing from state and federally funded projects to the underworld, payments having still been made this year.

An explosive leak from an associate of Mick Gatto exposes his secret empire, revealing a sprawling and continuing money trail from Big Build subcontractors to the gangland veteran and his associates. More than a dozen subcontractors on Labor projects have placed Gatto on their payroll.

The revelations come amid a separate leak revealing principal contractors confidentially documented state government directions to cave in to the CFMEU's lawless takeover of the Big Build. The CFMEU's Big Build takeover became entrenched while now Premier Jacinta Allan was minister responsible for the government's signature $100 billion infrastructure program.

The situation allowed gangland figures embedded within the union to profit from the unprecedented boom in publicly funded construction.

Big Build firms have separately broken their silence to publicly declare they had paid Gatto "due to the power of the union [the CFMEU] to stop our access" to projects.

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NEWS

Taxpayer dollars still secretly flowing from state's Big Build projects to Gatto

From Page 7

The company's owner, Luke Ellery, who has two family violence convictions, has previously denied any wrongdoing, but he could not be reached for comment.

Last week, and after *The Age* revealed that Women in Construction had been run by men with criminal records and deep gangland links, Dargavel, the labour hire commissioner, issued an order tearing up the firm's licence and giving it until this Friday to remove its workers from the $26 billion North East Link road tunnel project.

Construction industry insiders, speaking anonymously due to the threat of repercussions, said Ellery was now seeking to move his company's Big Build workforce to another labour hire firm with gangland links.

The leak also puts asphalting firm Elite Roads as making regular payments to Gatto this year, and in 2025 and 2024.

Elite Roads' manager director, Dean Coste, declined to answer questions when called, referring queries to a company email.

When asked to confirm why the firm had paid Gatto and how much, a marketing manager responded: "All contracts obtained by Elite Roads on Victoria's Big Build were secured through a rigorous and fully scrutinised procurement process. We have no information relevant to your enquiry."

Some Gatto payers did provide public comments. Tony Paragalli, owner of labour hire firm MI Trades & Labour, said his firm had to pay Gatto to retain work. Various MI entities paid Gatto more than $1 million.

"We have only ever won contracts conducted through the proper commercial and legal processes. Unfortunately, the issue we found was that after winning commercial tenders we were blocked from working on sites by the union," he said.

"We tried to negotiate with the union directly, but we did not have the personal relationships and it did not work. After repeated failed attempts, in 2022 we reluctantly joined other companies in employing Mr Gatto to provide industrial relations services and which then allowed us to provide the work we had successfully won through the tenders."

Paragalli said he did not "want to use this [Gatto industrial relations] service, but we felt we had no choice due to the power of the union to stop our access to the site. We stopped paying Mr Gatto for his union IR services in May 2025. As soon as we stopped paying Mr Gatto we started to get blocked from some sites again where we had already won tenders," he said.

"We have nothing to hide and have already presented all our company deeds, bank accounts and all other records to all authorities and regulators to fully establish the facts."

Rangedale, whose trucks service Big Build and government water projects, paid Gatto more than $250,000 up until April this year.

Rangedale director Neil Kermeen also said his company engaged Gatto's mediation business "solely for the purpose of mediating an ongoing dispute between Rangedale and the CFMEU".

"The outcome of the mediation was simply that Rangedale was able to continue performing work on projects where it had already established itself over many years prior to that engagement," Kermeen said in an emailed statement.

Kermeen said Gatto had never assisted Rangedale "influence the awarding of contracts", all of which he said Rangedale had won on merit.

The owner of Big Build subcontractor Major Cranes, Norm D'Ambra, has also made recent and regular $40,000 payments to Gatto totalling more than $500,000.

Another D'Ambra company, S and N Cranes, has an active Victorian government labour-hire licence, enabling it to send crane workers across the Big Build.

Files analysed by *The Age* reveal D'Ambra also paid Gatto to get the CFMEU to stop forcing his firm off major Victorian projects, but when he was called by this masthead on Friday, D'Ambra hung up.

Former senior law enforcement official Dan Bosich, who analysed the information provided by the Gatto network insider, said he could see no legitimate reason for any firm on the Big Build, or servicing any other large project, to pay Gatto.

Bosich said the fact companies were still paying Gatto showed that police, despite their best efforts, did not have the power or resources to stop such an entrenched system. He, too, called for a royal commission.

"I think they [Victorians] deserve nothing but the truth. This absolutely needs to be exposed," he said.

Stan Dryden, whose Indigenous Big Build labour hire firm Jarrah closed in mid-2025 but which previously listed Gatto's daughter's company as a shareholder, denied paying Gatto's industrial relations company, despite records showing that he had given Gatto $50,000 in mid-2025.

The owner of since-collapsed Metro Tunnel subcontractor A C Civil Build Pty Ltd, Rocco 'Rocky' Burbu, also admitted paying Gatto. Records show Burbu's companies have paid Gatto or his gangland associate John Khoury about $250,000 over several years.

Burbu initially said he had only engaged Gatto to "negotiate with" the CFMEU before he got an enterprise bargaining agreement in 2020. He later said he "might have used him to do some IR work" closer to when A C Civil went into liquidation in 2021.

Burbu also said he paid Gatto and Khoury a fee for helping him offload formwork.

"That was a finder's fee as far as we were concerned. They done us a favour," Burbu said, adding he considered Gatto a friend. "He's always helped me."

Big Build subcontractor LTK has paid Khoury between $400,000 and $700,000 a year over several years.

'As soon as we stopped paying Mr Gatto we started to get blocked from some sites.'

Tony Paragalli, owner of labour-hire firm MI Trades & Labour

The firm has previously denied making the payments. When Khoury was called on Friday, he said: "I haven't received that mate ... I—my hell. You gotta prove that one, mate."

Prior to its collapse, Big Build subcontractor Adcon, which also worked on the Metro Tunnel, paid Gatto over $1 million. Adcon founder Danny Isaacs, who moved to Dubai amid the collapse of his company in 2021, could not be reached for comment.

A C Civil and Adcon are separately listed in the Metro Tunnel consortium's correspondence to the state government in 2024 as contributing to project cost blowouts.

The same correspondence blames Labor for making the mega-project agree to use only certain CFMEU-stacked companies in parts of the project.

Clockwise from left: Tony Ciccone owns major Big Build subcontractors Cyrcan Civil and Project Labour Solutions; former Victorian police officer Dan Bosich; labour hire firm owner Tony Paragalli. Photos: 60 Minutes, supplied



Violent men cashing in on Allan's pro-women policy

EXCLUSIVE
Nick McKenzie, Lachlan Abbott

BUILDING BAD

A company that secured huge contracts as the leading women-led supplier of female workers on Labor's Big Build is owned by a male serial domestic violence abuser, was managed by a male drug trafficker also accused of family violence and has deep links to bikies and violent criminals.

The labour hire company, Women in Construction, is supplying dozens of female workers on the state and federally funded North East Link project and, at its height, previously supplied up to 250 workers across multiple Big Build rail and road projects, generating an estimated $2.5 million a week.

The firm boasts of endorsements from the Labor government's key Big Build partner contractors, including the North East Link consortium, despite its deep links to bikie gangs, underworld figures and men who have committed serious and repeated domestic violence against women, including Women in Construction's owner and founder, Luke Ellery.

Since 2018, the company has strongly and publicly aligned its business with Labor's $100 billion Big Build infrastructure program, the ALP's gender equity policy and the scandal-tainted CFMEU, which for years wielded huge control over which labour hire companies could win lucrative work on road and rail projects.

Labor's policy, which is also called Women in Construction and which was developed with the backing and input of the CFMEU, mandates that major Big Build contractors prioritise the hiring of women to ostensibly deliver better working and social outcomes. But a major investigation can reveal the Women in Construction company was used as a vehicle for underworld figures and bikies to place their relatives, friends and associates on Big Build projects, with the firm even taking directives to employ select staff from bikie gang leaders with violent reputations.

The firm separately engaged with gangland veteran Mick Gatto in an attempt to win contracts from a Big Build subcontractor.

The scandal is the latest crisis to envelop Premier Jacinta Allan – who was previously the longstanding minister responsible for the Big Build – and again highlights the

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ALL MEDIA: INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Award Partner Guardian Australia

Nick McKenzie, *The Age, 60 Minutes*, 'Gatto's rise and a premier's fall'



Not many journalists can say that their reporting brought down a premier and kicked off a royal commission. Nick McKenzie's landmark investigative journalism work has defined Victoria's political landscape for years to come. His investigation of the relationships between organised crime, the CFMEU and the Victorian government exposed the worst corruption scandal in recent Victorian history.

The investigation revealed how underworld figures such as Mick Gatto were getting rich off taxpayer-funded schemes. McKenzie convinced figures inside Gatto's network to leak an extraordinary array of financial records that showed an ongoing money trail from the Big Build to gangland figures in the CFMEU. His work investigating the CFMEU led him to uncover the failure of the CFMEU scheme of administration, which was meant to address the union's problems with corruption and organised crime. Union boss John Perkovic was sacked after McKenzie unearthed property records and front companies showing alleged bribery.

The work came at great risk to McKenzie's own safety. He and his family were forced to relocate after unidentified criminals visited his home and dismantled his security system in late 2025. Beyond the investigation itself, each piece of work lays out complex relationships and power structures with clarity and cohesion.

Nick McKenzie is a multi-award winning investigative reporter for *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *60 Minutes*.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

Nick McKenzie's explosive investigative work significantly contributed to Victorian premier Jacinta Allan losing her job, and prompted a royal commission – which the government had resisted for two years. He exposed how the underworld was still getting rich from taxpayer-funded projects supposedly safeguarded by the premier, as well as the failure of government measures to clean up the CFMEU: including a million-dollar money trail leading to underworld figure Mick Gatto, and triggering an inquiry by the Australian Federal Police into bribery.



Gatto still getting cut of taxpayers' Big Build cash

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BIG BUILD BOSS VOUCHED FOR CRIMINAL

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NEWS

Taxpayer dollars still secretly flowing from state's Big Build projects to Gatto



Violent men cashing in on Allan's pro-women policy

EXCLUSIVE

BUILDING BAD

If facts are sacred,
journalism must
be defended.

The Guardian is proud to partner with the Walkley Awards.
Congratulations to all 2026 winners and finalists.

The Guardian

PRINT/TEXT: NEWS REPORT

Award Partner MinterEllison

Sarah Martin, *Guardian Australia*, 'Pauline Hanson and Gina Rinehart – undeclared flights'



Sarah Martin's articles revealed that Australia's richest person, Gina Rinehart, provided flights and financial support to Pauline Hanson's One Nation, something the party denied and sought to conceal.

In mid-December 2025, Pauline Hanson's chief of staff James Ashby told journalists that One Nation had "not seen any money" from Australia's richest person, Gina Rinehart. But in late December, Martin received information that suggested Rinehart had been quietly funding the party for many months. She then set about proving it.

Working her sources and scrutinising publicly available data sets, including flight tracking data and parliamentary expense records, Martin broke the story that Rinehart had flown Hanson and Ashby to the Conservative Political Action Conference in the US, where they also stayed at Rinehart's $60m Florida mansion. They had not declared this support in accordance with Senate rules.

Hanson herself told Martin at a February press conference: "If you are trying to say I am being funded by Gina Rinehart, the answer is no." But in February and March, Martin reported on five more undeclared flights provided by Rinehart or her subsidiary companies, breaching Senate rules. She led the reporting on Rinehart's patronage of One Nation, setting the media agenda and meticulously backing up her reporting with documentary evidence. The party eventually pivoted its public messaging about Rinehart's support.

Sarah Martin is a senior correspondent with *The Guardian*'s national investigations team. She has covered business and politics at a number of mastheads, including in the federal parliamentary press gallery as *The Guardian*'s chief political correspondent and *The West Australian*'s political editor.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

Sarah Martin tenaciously pushed through consistent denials and resistance to report on the financial links between Pauline Hanson and Gina Rinehart, exposing the extent to which Rinehart was tipping money into the coffers of a resurgent One Nation. Martin's use of flight tracker data, expense declarations and sources led to a series of articles showing that the party's initial claims that Rinehart was not financially supporting them were untrue.



Pauline Hanson travelled to US on Gina Rinehart's private jet to attend CPAC

Exclusive: One Nation senator travelled on mining magnate's Gulfstream 700 in October and stayed at Rinehart's US$66m Palm Beach mansion

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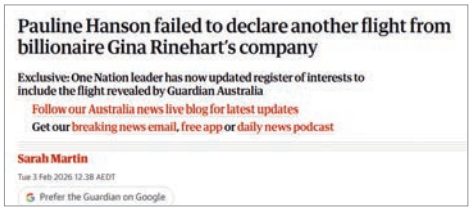
Sarah Martin

Tue 30 Dec 2025 21.37 AEDT

Prefer the Guardian on Google



Pauline Hanson failed to declare another flight from billionaire Gina Rinehart's company

Exclusive: One Nation leader has now updated register of interests to include the flight revealed by Guardian Australia

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Sarah Martin

Tue 3 Feb 2026 12.38 AEDT

Prefer the Guardian on Google



Pauline Hanson fails to properly declare more free flights from Gina Rinehart

Exclusive: One Nation leader updates register after questions from the Guardian to include multiple flights courtesy of Rinehart's company

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Sarah Martin

Tue 17 Mar 2026 16.23 AEDT



NIKON-WALKLEY PRESS PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

Award Partner Nikon

Jason Edwards, *Herald Sun*



The Walkley Judging Board praised the variety of Jason Edwards' Photographer of the Year portfolio and the strength of his standalone images, describing him as a classic news photographer. Edwards covered it all, from breaking news to courts, sport and human interest features.

In an image that ran on front pages around the country, Edwards captured Erin Patterson arriving for her pre-sentencing hearing, the first time she'd been seen since her guilty verdict. He waited across the road from the court, pre-focusing through a second-floor window, and caught her split-second glance skyward.

Edwards chased police raids through Victoria's north-east as they searched for Dezi Freeman, the man who shot and killed two police officers in Porepunkah. He captured the search line against Mount Buffalo with a long lens, showing the scale, isolation and pressure of the manhunt. And he shot between the legs of a Protective Service Officer to photograph alleged ISIS bride Kawsar Ahmad.

Then there are the extraordinary images of the Yarck bushfires and their aftermath, where Edwards described putting down his camera to hold a hose alongside families fighting for their farms and homes. Emotion and humanity shine through in an outstanding body of photographic work.

Jason Edwards has been a staff photographer at the *Herald Sun* and News Corp since 2008, covering all aspects of Australian life, politics, news and features. He works both in stills and video and has won numerous state and national awards for his work. This is his first Walkley.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

A great spread of shots from a photographer who can perform in multiple situations. Every photo brings challenges: from the physical danger of bushfire, the time pressure of breaking news, the dynamics of sport, and the challenge of gaining a family's trust to portray a sick child with sensitivity. Jason Edwards shows broad visual perspectives as well as unexpected images of Australia.



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1. **Erin Patterson's last look:** Erin Patterson arrives for her pre-sentencing hearing at Melbourne Supreme Court.
2. **Winners:** Victorious Brisbane Lions captain Harris Andrews leaves the ground with a winning grin after the 2025 AFL Grand Final.
3. **Yarck burning:** A family and their friends tried to save more than 150 years of history as the Yarck bushfire flew through their farm. Moments after the pump failed, the shed was lost, and all they could do was stand back and watch as the heat became too intense.
4. **Devastation:** The day after the Yarck fires, and with fire still burning, a couple return to the house where they had planned to retire, only to find it razed to the ground.
5. **Millie's fight:** Two-year-old Milly receives treatment after surgery to remove a tumour at Royal Children's Hospital, supported by her parents Jacqueline and Lewis.
6. **Isis bride returns home:** Alleged ISIS bride Kawsar Ahmad appears outside the Melbourne Magistrate's Court.
7. **Hunt For Dezi:** Police search for Dezi Freeman in Victoria's remote north-east, framed against Mount Buffalo.


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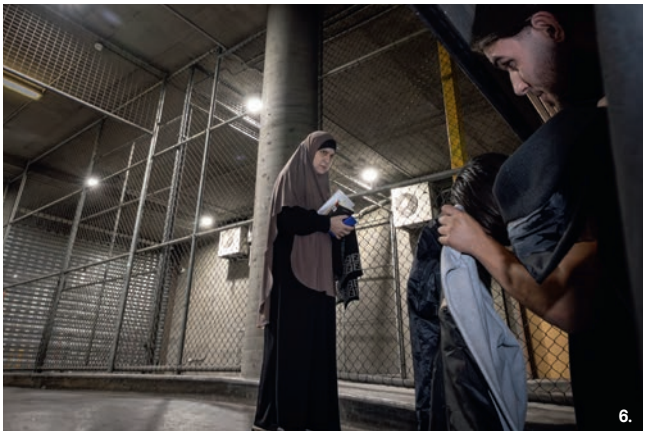
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PRINT/TEXT: FEATURE WRITING SHORT (UNDER 4000 WORDS)

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

Sam Buckingham-Jones, *The Australian Financial Review*, ‘Maccas in a Rolls: Inside Kyle Sandilands’ pivot to $100 tradie plans’



The dramatic fallout between Kyle Sandilands and Jackie “O” Henderson was one of the biggest media stories of the year. While the pair had always had their dramas and controversies, the tensions hit boiling point in February when Sandilands criticised Henderson’s work ethic. This triggered a sudden split in their professional relationship, multiple legal sagas and a whole new independent venture for Sandilands.

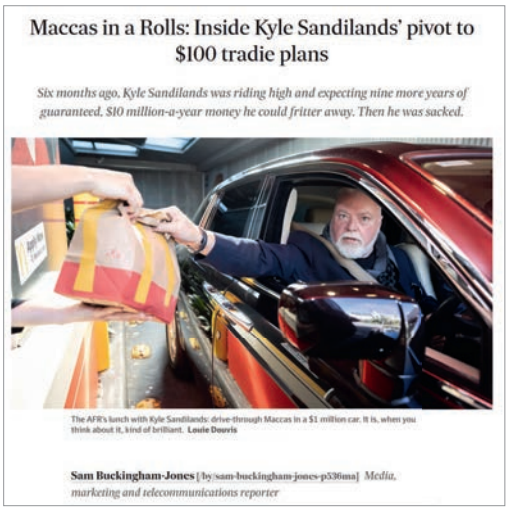
Sam Buckingham-Jones’s feature follows Sandilands as he eats McDonald’s and drives around in his million-dollar car in the lead-up to the launch of *Kyle Sandilands Live*. Buckingham-Jones gives us insight into the man himself and the rapidly changing radio industry. The context of Sandilands and Henderson’s clash is presented objectively and fairly, as Sandilands pushes his perspective onto the reporter and the reader.

Both Sandilands and Buckingham-Jones speak with rare honesty. The business and industry insights are cleverly woven into the story of Sandilands getting lunch in his Rolls-Royce. Vivid descriptions of the events let the characters speak for themselves, while the reader is left to make their own judgements on the subject, the industry and the drama.

Sam Buckingham-Jones is the media, marketing and telecommunications reporter at *The Australian Financial Review*.

JUDGES’ COMMENTS

This is an outstanding piece of writing – at once entertaining and highly informative. As Buckingham-Jones drives through Sydney with Sandilands, the reader has the sensation of being in the back seat of the Rolls-Royce with them, eavesdropping on a wonderfully indiscreet conversation. The story combines hard facts with bizarre quotes and astute observations, painting a vivid picture of a professional provocateur at a turning point in his career.



Maccas in a Rolls: Inside Kyle Sandilands’ pivot to $100 tradie plans

Six months ago, Kyle Sandilands was riding high and expecting nine more years of guaranteed, $10 million-a-year money he could fritter away. Then he was sacked.

The AFR’s lunch with Kyle Sandilands: drive-through Maccas in a $1 million car. It is, when you think about it, kind of brilliant. **Louie Douvis**

Sam Buckingham-Jones [by/sam-buckingham-jones-p536ma] *Media, marketing and telecommunications reporter*







PRINT/TEXT: FEATURE WRITING LONG (OVER 4000 WORDS)

Melissa Fyfe, Carla Hildebrandt, *Good Weekend Magazine – The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Virginia: The final chapter'





This investigative feature unearthed the Australian side of a massive international story. The story traced the final months of the life of Virginia Giuffre, one of Jeffrey Epstein's best-known victims, who called Australia home.

Melissa Fyfe and Carla Hildebrandt's investigation stretched across Australia and the US. Over six months, they drew on court documents, Giuffre's diaries, metadata from photographs, and exclusive access to her family and carers to paint a picture of the complex situation surrounding her death.

The *Good Weekend* feature uses Giuffre's last months as a clear structure, guiding readers through a broader story that exposed the failures of the domestic violence system in Australia.

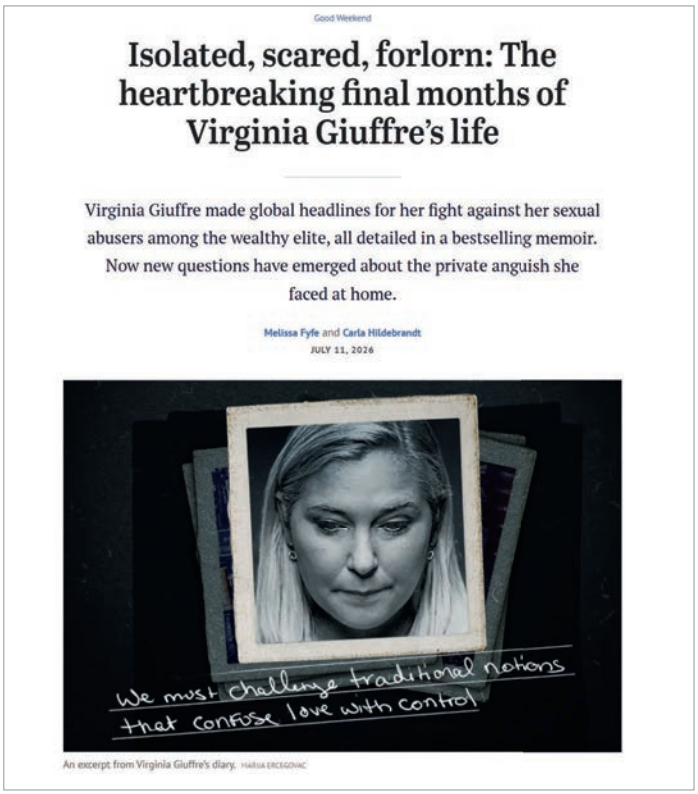
It handles the sensitive subject matter delicately, demonstrating restraint in publishing only necessary information.

In the midst of the journalists' investigation, Western Australian police announced that they would review all interactions between police and Giuffre. Sixteen of Australia's top domestic violence experts also wrote to the Coroner, requesting a review into her death.

Melissa Fyfe was a senior writer for *Good Weekend* magazine. She has won many awards, including the Walkley for Feature Writing Short in 2025, and is a former senior editor and member of *The Age* investigative team. Carla Hildebrandt is a *WAToday* journalist who has worked for the ABC's *Four Corners* program and *The Daily Telegraph* as a court reporter.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

A compelling feature story with global interest. Melissa Fyfe and Carla Hildebrandt delivered a forensic, revelatory and nuanced examination of Virginia Giuffre's final months in Australia and her tragic suicide. Based on a six-month investigation spanning Australia and the US – taking in high-level confidential sources, court transcripts, freedom of information requests and a crucial police report found among the Epstein files – their story triggered reviews by the WA Police and the WA Ombudsman.



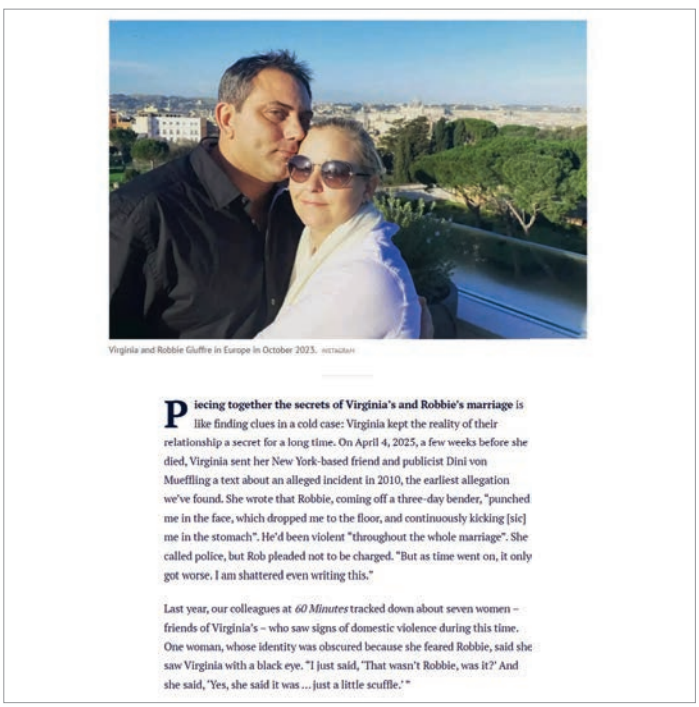
Good Weekend

Isolated, scared, forlorn: The heartbreaking final months of Virginia Giuffre's life

Virginia Giuffre made global headlines for her fight against her sexual abusers among the wealthy elite, all detailed in a bestselling memoir. Now new questions have emerged about the private anguish she faced at home.

Melissa Fyfe and Carla Hildebrandt
JULY 11, 2026

An excerpt from Virginia Giuffre's diary. MARTIN ERCEGOVAC



Virginia and Robbie Giuffre in Europe in October 2023. INSTAGRAM

Piecing together the secrets of Virginia's and Robbie's marriage is like finding clues in a cold case: Virginia kept the reality of their relationship a secret for a long time. On April 4, 2025, a few weeks before she died, Virginia sent her New York-based friend and publicist Dini von Mueffling a text about an alleged incident in 2010, the earliest allegation we've found. She wrote that Robbie, coming off a three-day bender, "punched me in the face, which dropped me to the floor, and continuously kicking [sic] me in the stomach". He'd been violent "throughout the whole marriage". She called police, but Rob pleaded not to be charged. "But as time went on, it only got worse. I am shattered even writing this."

Last year, our colleagues at *60 Minutes* tracked down about seven women – friends of Virginia's – who saw signs of domestic violence during this time. One woman, whose identity was obscured because she feared Robbie, said she saw Virginia with a black eye. "I just said, 'That wasn't Robbie, was it?' And she said, 'Yes, she said it was ... just a little scuffle.'"

ALL MEDIA: COMMENTARY, ANALYSIS, OPINION AND CRITIQUE

Award Partner Thomsons

David Leser, *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, ‘The Bondi massacre and its aftermath’



With his signature elegant writing, thoughtfulness and accessibility, three columns by David Leser bring linguistic and moral clarity to a complex challenge to Australia’s social cohesion. They cover three different, but related, events: the Bondi Beach massacre, the visit of Israel’s President Isaac Herzog to Australia, and the ongoing horrific consequences of October 7 and Israel’s continuing assault on Gaza.

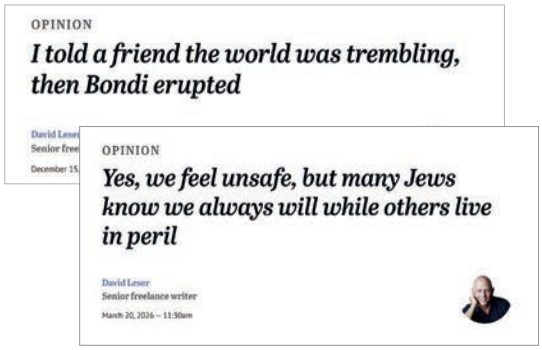
The common thread is Leser’s efforts to grapple with a complex conflict, and within it a personal one: what is the journalist’s responsibility when events collide with personal conscience and identity, in this case his own Jewish identity? This work is deeply personal but calm and nuanced, using small personal truths to get at bigger truths. Leser writes to honour the diversity of views within the Jewish community, and to illuminate rather than simplify, even at the risk of sacrificing friendships.

David Leser is a journalist and author whose latest book, *Light Sleeper: Memoir of a Troubled Jew* is published in November 2026 by Penguin Random House. He is a former staff writer and regular contributor to *Good Weekend* magazine and a columnist for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*. This is Leser’s third Walkley: he won this category in 2024 and for Magazine Feature Writing in 1999.

JUDGES’ COMMENTS

David Leser’s deeply personal columns analysed the Bondi massacre, which happened in his neighbourhood and targeted his community. Noting the immediate finger-pointing, he explained that Jewish people are not a monolith. He expressed his fear that justifiable criticism of Israel would be further conflated with antisemitism, articulated his view that many Jewish Australians see a “divided moral universe” with a hierarchy of victims, and persuasively argued that Jewish safety must be inseparable from Palestinian safety.





Thomsons

Congratulations to the finalists and winners of the 71st Walkley Awards 2026

Thomsons is proud to sponsor this year’s Walkley Award for Commentary, Analysis, Opinion and Critique

CARTOON OF THE YEAR

Award Partner Banki Haddock Fiora

Megan Herbert, *The Age*, 'Discarded'



Megan Herbert's haunting cartoon highlights an urgent issue in Australia. In a single week of July 2026, four women and girls were killed in separate incidents: Lavanya Chappa, Jana Armstrong, Layla Jeffery and a 17-year-old Yolngu girl. In each case a male known to the victim was detained and charged. Our nation is in crisis, but despite governments responding with concern, taskforces, statements and targets, the model remains crisis response rather than policy focused on prevention. Frontline workers and critical service providers are overwhelmed and underfunded. And while lawmakers keep going back to the drawing board, the body count piles up.

Herbert's cartoon says something profound with very few words. It is layered with meaning, each crumpled paper body landing a gut-punch in the view. The judges praised it as clever, original, profound and almost literary in its quality.

Herbert described this cartoon as her editorial comment on "how it feels to be a woman in Australia witnessing this ongoing crisis and the failure of governments to coordinate frontline needs with the allocation of sufficient funds and effective action and intervention strategies. It is to feel discarded. It is to feel struck by the apparent lack of urgency. It is to feel disposable."

Megan Herbert has been a cartoonist for Nine Newspapers since 2021. She received a Stanley Award in 2025, the Political Cartoonist of the Year Award in 2024, the Climate Council Cartoon Award in 2023, and a Kennedy Award in 2022. She lives and works on Bunurong Country.



JUDGES' COMMENTS

A clever cartoon on a difficult topic to cartoon about: the safety of women and girls. Megan Herbert takes a common image – failed responses shown as scrunched-up pages being thrown away – and cleverly shifts the focus to those affected. The visual metaphor of discarded policies as women's bodies is powerful because you don't 'get' it immediately, which adds to the impact. A compelling visual comment on a continuously urgent issue.



ALL MEDIA: COVERAGE OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Award Partner National Indigenous Times

Ben Smee & the Guardian Australia team, *Guardian Australia*, 'The betrayal of Kardell Lomas'



Guardian Australia's powerful investigation into the death of Kardell Lomas found new evidence of serious police mistakes and alleged systemic racism prior to her killing in 2019. The 31-year-old Kamilaroi and Mununjali woman had repeatedly sought help from services and the police before her death.

First Nations women in Australia are seven times more likely to be the victim of intimate partner homicide than non-Indigenous women. Ben Smee and the Guardian Australia team's reporting prioritised sensitivity and cultural appropriateness, working with Lomas's family and their lawyers to gather documents, including body-worn camera footage. The story centred Kardell Lomas's life and family, while presenting her death not as an isolated act of domestic violence but within the context of the systemic issues faced by First Nations women when they seek help.

Harrowing and well-told, this report was built on trust and contacts cultivated over years of Smee's reporting on police responses to domestic and family violence.

Revelations about Lomas's death prompted the federal minister for social services, Tanya Plibersek, to call for reforms, and the federal government's expert advisory panel on sexual violence to call for new independent oversight of police responses. A coroner is still considering whether to re-open the case and hold an inquest.

Ben Smee is *Guardian Australia*'s Queensland correspondent. Marni Cordell is the investigations and special projects editor. Lisa Favazzo is a multimedia journalist. Miles Herbert is an audio producer. Shelley Hepworth is the head of multimedia.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

This investigation into the 2019 killing of pregnant First Nations woman Kardell Lomas by her then-partner uncovered new evidence of serious police mistakes and alleged systemic racism as she sought help in the lead-up to her death. The judges praised the forensic approach taken by the journalists who exposed the failings in systems designed to protect the most vulnerable. The piece was produced with sensitivity and care, and a humanity that respected the subject and allowed the audience to understand the depth of this tragedy.




Pregnant and frightened, Kardell Lomas begged for help. Police found her body in the boot of a car

Exclusive: The 31-year-old had dozens of interactions with support services and police before her death at the hands of a dangerous man. Her family now wants answers

***Warning:** This article contains the name and image of an Indigenous*


'My sister trusted them'

A deputy police commissioner, Cameron Harsley, said the case highlighted that police had "a long way to go with breaking down the barriers and the trust with First Nations people".

"Often the communication with police in those cultures is not good because there's mistrust in the relationship. And there's mistrust, I would say, in both ways. The people [and] the police and the police and the people we're dealing with."

The coronial finding repeatedly makes a similar point: that Kardell mistrusted government agencies and did not want to involve police.



ALL MEDIA: COVERAGE OF COMMUNITY & REGIONAL AFFAIRS

Award Partner BHP

Donna Page, *Newcastle Herald*, 'Anthony Di Nardo: 19 charges, eight alleged victims over 20 years'



It's easy to underestimate the challenge in taking on a powerful member of a small community. This piece built on years of investigation into one of Newcastle's most prominent businessmen to reveal numerous allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse of power. The *Newcastle Herald*'s investigation opened the floodgates to reveal the scale of wrongdoing, having a decisive impact on the local community.

Anthony Di Nardo was the Hunter Region's leading real estate agent. His extensive business network gave him a reputation for being untouchable in his community. The *Newcastle Herald* began its investigation into Di Nardo in 2023 as part of a broader series on the real estate industry. Interviewing more than a hundred people and gaining the trust of women, girls and men who had been close to Di Nardo, Page revealed a culture that allegedly allowed sexual violence to flourish.

In February, one woman went to the police, but there was not enough evidence for them to act. Following publication, however, dozens more people came forward. Di Nardo was arrested and charged with 19 offences relating to eight former employees. As police continue to investigate further complaints, Fair Trading suspended Di Nardo's real estate licence, his franchise agreements were terminated and his business empire is in liquidation.

Donna Page is an investigative journalist at the *Newcastle Herald*, where she previously worked as Day Editor and chief of staff. Page spent several years working overseas for the *South China Morning Post*, *LusaNews* and *Macau Closer*. This is her third Walkley, following wins in this category with other *Newcastle Herald* reporters in 2019 and 2020.


NEWCASTLE HERALD
VOICE OF THE HUNTER
STAFF SPEAK OUT
Hunter real estate boss denies sexual misconduct allegations


Hunter real estate boss denies staff claims of misconduct

JUDGES' COMMENTS

A powerful example of regional investigative journalism that led to Newcastle real estate's own #MeToo moment. Over 18 months, Donna Page investigated claims of sexual misconduct against high-profile real estate agent Anthony Di Nardo. She earned the confidence of more than 20 former and current co-workers, who feared speaking out due to a culture of silence that had endured for years.



ALL MEDIA: SPORTS JOURNALISM

Award Partner University of Queensland

Jay Clark, *Herald Sun*, ‘Geelong Cats’ Secret Concussion Contract’



In a huge story that reverberated around the AFL world, *Herald Sun* chief football writer Jay Clark scored a scoop with major consequences after an 18-month investigation into brain trauma in football.

Clark revealed exclusively that an AFL club – which he later revealed to be Geelong Cats – had struck a secret concussion contract with one of its players, Jake Kolodjashnij, in which he waived his legal rights if he suffered more brain trauma. The judges noted how notoriously difficult it is to prise information out of the AFL or clubs in Melbourne, praising Clark’s experience, research and the significant evidence he unearthed.

In follow-up reports, Clark explained an insurance company’s questionable tactics in helping to deny three high-profile players their concussion payouts. This story highlighted the devastating impacts of brain trauma and led to the removal of Zurich’s insurance policy for AFL players and its major sponsorship of Melbourne Football Club. Clark also broke the story on a new Work Safe investigation into the AFL. It’s a story that will only get bigger as the AFL faces a $1billion class action over player concussions in 2027.

Jay Clark is the chief football writer for the *Herald Sun*, based in Melbourne. For almost 20 years, he has helped set the football agenda with his breaking news, deep-dive feature writing and issues-based reporting. He is a trusted voice on the biggest stories in the AFL.

JUDGES’ COMMENTS

Jay Clark’s relentless AFL concussion reporting delivered a bombshell: Geelong Football Club had secretly contracted a player to waive his legal rights over further brain trauma. The exclusive story dominated national sports media for five days, and implicated senior AFL figures including chair Craig Drummond. Leaning on trusted sources developed over years, and delivered under intense legal and AFL pressure, this was high-quality sports journalism with lasting consequences.


INSIDE FOOTY’S $1 BILLION SMOKING GUN

FROM BADGE OF HONOUR TO COSTLIEST DECADE

Hit players need their heads read

SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

Jay Clark


NEWS 05

Former Magpie, expert slam insurer

‘IMMORAL’ THAT YOU QUESTION THIS CLAIM


SPORT AFL

SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

‘INVASIVE’ ‘UNETHICAL’ ‘IMMORAL’

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SPORT PHOTOGRAPHY

Michael Klein, *Herald Sun*, News Corp Australia, 'Klein's Folio of Work'



There's an unwritten law of sport photography that an image must orient the viewer with clear cues – a tennis shot should include a tennis ball, for example. Michael Klein turns that literal approach on its head, with a creative, artistic portfolio that extends beyond the field or court of play. Instead, he contextualises the narrative and emotion of key sporting moments, displaying both technical skill and his depth of knowledge across codes.

American tennis star Coco Gauff always plays with her hair tied back, but Klein captures her practising with it loose, letting its movement tell the story. Carlos Alcaraz's bionic-style arm, veins striking in afternoon light, forms the focal point of Klein's shot of him mid-serve. An emotional Adelaide Crows captain Jordan Dawson appears alone but buoyed by the shadow hands of fans after his return to playing weeks after his brother's death. Klein's powerful image expresses the support Dawson received publicly and behind the scenes from his teammates, club and the AFL community. Rounding out the folio, AFL players tussle in torrential rain, gritty in black and white.

Michael Klein has worked at the *Herald Sun* for 40 years. He started in the darkroom and has covered sport as a photographer for more than 30 years. Klein has won multiple AFL awards and is a member of the AFL Hall of Fame's media category. This is his first Walkley.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

Michael Klein has shot a variety of great sporting moments with grit, rawness and innovation. Coco Gauff's flying hair relays the dynamism of her tennis; poetic shadows support Adelaide captain Jordan Dawson, weeks after the death of his brother; levitating athleticism defines a Glasgow Commonwealth Games sprinter; and a black-and-white image of footballers in the rain is simply cinematic.



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1. Adelaide Crows skipper Jordan Dawson walks down the race after a game, looking up to and thanking the supportive crowd, just weeks after his brother Jaryd was tragically found dead in Robe, South Australia.
2. Hawthorn and Carlton battle it out at the MCG in torrential rain.
3. Coco Gauff's hair flies during a pre-Australian Open practice session at Melbourne Park.
4. Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz practises before the 2026 Australian Open at Melbourne Park. He went on to win the men's singles title, completing a career Grand Slam
5. Indian sprinter Gurindervir Singh leaps into the air before the start of his 100m heat at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games. Singh finished second in the heat, but his time of 10.39 seconds missed the cut-off for progression to the semi-finals.

AUDIO SHORT (UNDER 20 MINUTES)

Award Partner ABC

Hamish Macdonald, Mark Tobin, Jemima Huston, Georgie Carroll, ABC, 702 Sydney Mornings, 'Gendered Violence Against Women in Australian Politics'








Violent threats against female politicians were pursued and uncovered by the 702 ABC Sydney Mornings team in a series of exclusive stories over 10 months. First, while monitoring right-wing message boards, the program discovered abuse and threats targeting two female MPs. NSW MP Kellie Sloane and federal MP Allegra Spender were alerted to the abuse and appeared on the program to discuss it. The story was picked up nationally within minutes and ultimately led to a man being charged over alleged threats against Spender.

Then, in July 2026, the team was tipped off to threats directed at NSW Minister for Agriculture Tara Moriarty in the comments on a Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party Facebook post. The information was verified and key interviews were secured that morning in order to break the story. Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party MLC Mark Banasiak was brought on the show, allowing host Hamish Macdonald to conduct a masterly accountability interview.

The team undertook impressive investigative, verification and broadcast work, balancing multiple angles of a pressing national story. They managed to do all of this within the constraints of live radio, demonstrating efficiency and thoroughness in their craft.

702 ABC *Sydney Mornings with Hamish Macdonald* is a talkback radio program serving wider Sydney and the Central Coast. It keeps listeners informed and entertained each weekday with original local stories, accountability interviews, listener contributions, and engaging discussions. The show is produced by Mark Tobin, Jemima Huston and Georgie Carroll.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

With exclusive research and reporting, the ABC *Mornings* team uncovered violent threats against female politicians, driving wider scrutiny and police action. Under the pressures of live radio, host Hamish Macdonald delivered a masterful accountability interview with a Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party MLC. He also spoke to the women targeted, revealing the reality of the threats and slurs the women face. Impactful journalism that shows the medium at its best.

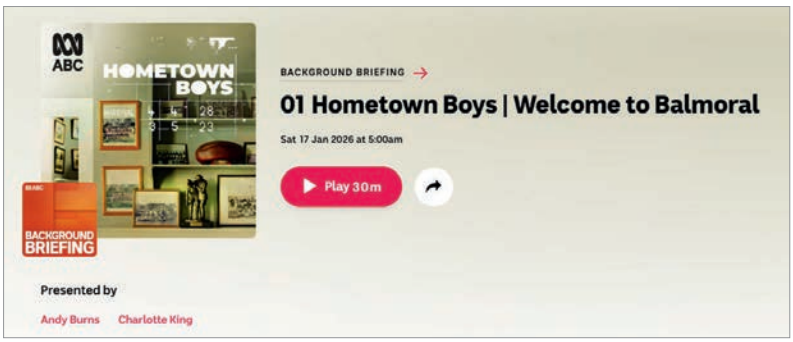


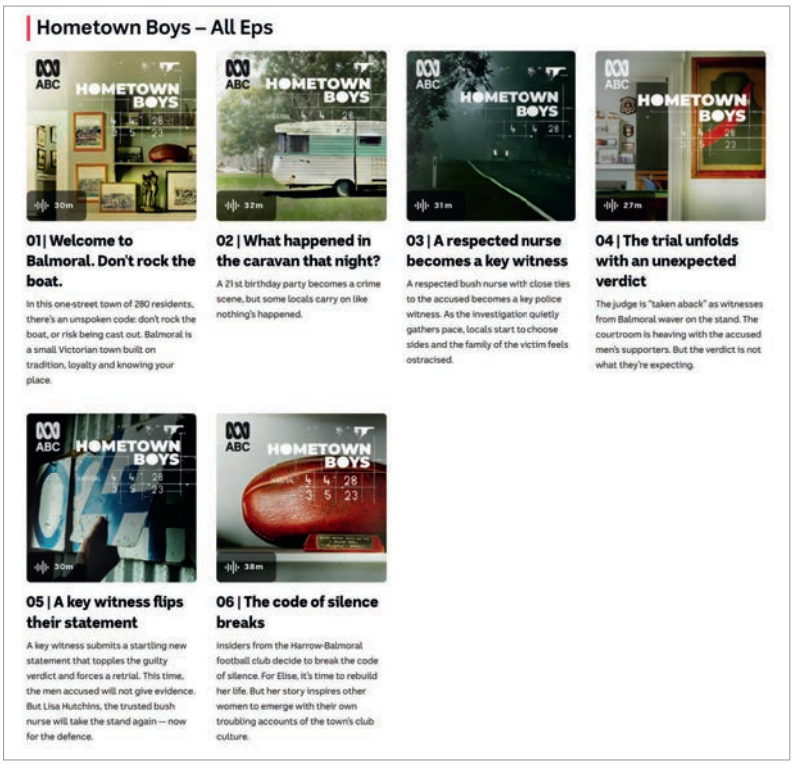
AUDIO LONG (OVER 20 MINUTES)

Andy Burns, Charlotte King with Background Briefing and Regional Investigations team, ABC, *Background Briefing*, 'Hometown Boys'









The six-part podcast 'Hometown Boys' explored how a regional town turned against a rape victim after a local football player and his mate were convicted of sexual assault. Andy Burns and Charlotte King spent five years tracking four trials, dozens of court hearings, building relationships, tracing networks and mapping complex social dynamics in Balmoral, Victoria, population 280.

The judges praised Burns' and King's tenacity and fieldwork, and the way they carefully reconstructed the timeline and wove in multiple perspectives. They left no stone unturned, recording many first-hand voices, which added to the story's authenticity. And they made the most of the audio medium, building atmosphere through the soundscape – a ref's whistle, utes tooting, chanting in the changeroom – to take listeners inside the town, the pub, the party.

In February 2026, the Victorian government expedited reforms to scrap 'good character' references in sexual assault sentencing. In announcing the reforms, then-premier Jacinta Allan described 'Hometown Boys' revelations as a trigger for change.

Andy Burns and Charlotte King are journalists with the ABC Regional Investigations unit. They have worked on national news and current affairs programs including *Four Corners*, *Background Briefing, Australian Story* and *7.30.*

JUDGES' COMMENTS

This was a triumph of narrative audio storytelling. With skilful reporting, the journalists carefully managed the community's instinct to close ranks, and wove together family relationships, court evidence and counter narratives. A riveting examination of a town's reaction to serious misconduct – and a story that has resonated across Australia.

ALL MEDIA: EXPLANATORY JOURNALISM

Tobacco War Team, *The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald, Brisbane Times* and *WA Today*, 'Australia's Illegal Tobacco Trade'



Firebombings, the tobacco excise and underworld turf wars dominated much of the year's news agenda. The Tobacco War Team provided fresh insight into the causes and operation of this issue through the innovative use of visualisations and storytelling.

By tracking the supply chain of illicit cigarettes, the piece provides a clear overview of how importers are able to evade capture as they enter the Australian market. The reporting analysed more than 1000 shipments to reveal the undertakings and clever sleights of hand employed by the billion-dollar underworld industry. Using leaked shipping records alongside intelligence from industry insiders, underworld figures and law enforcement sources, the team tracked the secretive trade networks from their beginnings in the Middle East to their broad impact on Australia.

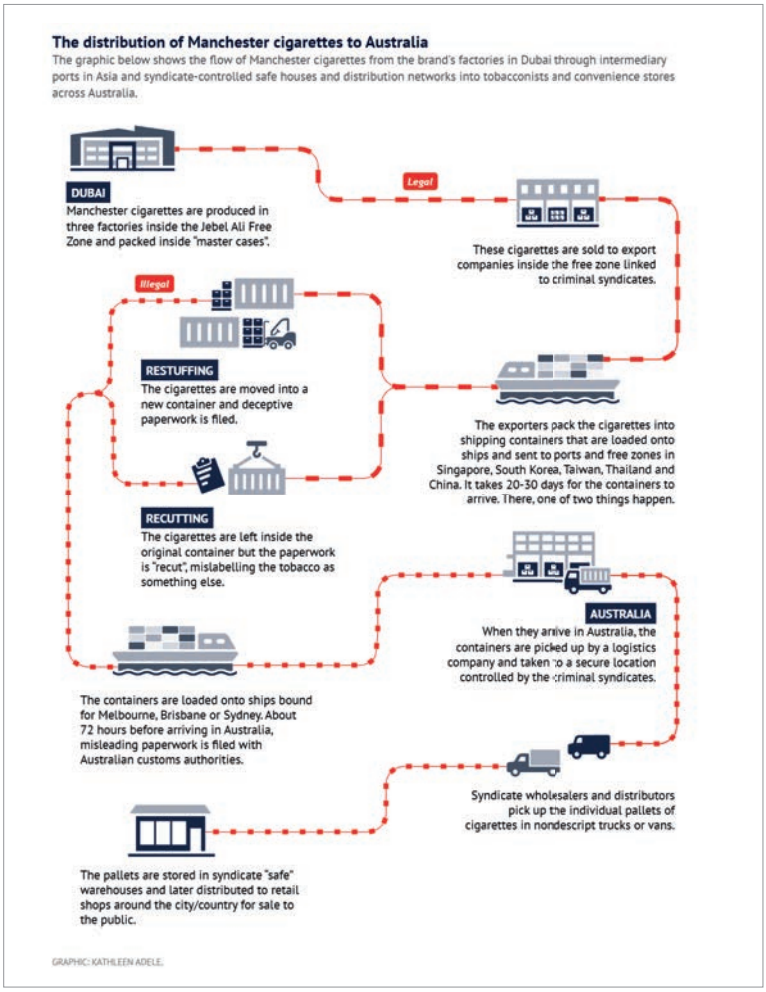
Through the innovative use of digital storytelling, the piece offers an unprecedented look at how insiders in free trade zones across the Middle East and South-East Asia work with criminal syndicates to flood Australia with cheap tobacco. Maps, data visualisations and infographics tell a detailed and holistic story of the notoriously complex and elusive industry.

The reporting in this project was led by Chris Vedelago and Marta Pascual Juanola, investigative journalists at *The Age*. The Visual Stories Team produced and developed the bespoke digital format and interactive elements of the story.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

'Australia's Illegal Tobacco Trade' synthesises a complex trans-national smuggling system into an accessible and brilliantly illustrative piece of explainer journalism. By tracing specific vessels, shipping routes and other data, it sets out the scale of the trade, the flow of contraband and its import into Australia – as well as the wider Asia-Pacific region. The piece is ambitious in scope, highlighting the intersection between global trade networks, organised crime, and domestic law enforcement policies.





DIGITAL MEDIA: INNOVATION JOURNALISM

ABC Digital Story Innovations Team, ABC News Online, 'This Is What 84 Cameras Reveal About the Bondi Attack'

A stunning feat of technology and journalism, this project drew on eyewitness videos and accounts of the Bondi terror attack to create context and cohesiveness from chaos.

The ABC team verified and geolocated more than 130 videos captured by survivors, eyewitnesses and other cameras in the area. They used sound as a verification tool, using the sound of gunfire to synchronise 84 videos into a second-by-second timeline. Alongside the digital innovation they integrated extensive interviews, compiling testimony from survivors and the families of those who didn't survive

The use of technology deepened the story and helped viewers to comprehend the human consequences of the shooting. This is journalism that bears witness, creating a historical record. Sensitively and meticulously, the ABC team set a new benchmark for recording history in its first draft.

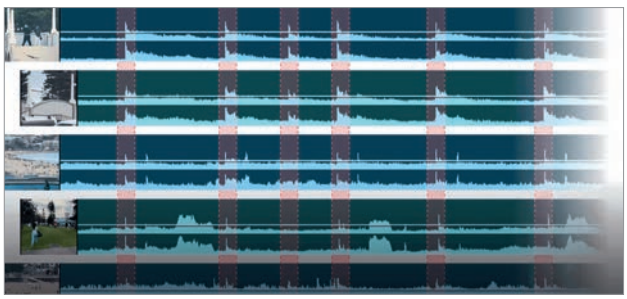
The ABC project team included: Inga Ting (reporter), Alex Palmer (video timeline editing, story design and research), Dylan Welch (research), Lara Sonnenschein (research) Thomas Brettell (development) and Katia Shatoba (development), Mark Doman (fact checking, additional research), Jack Fisher (additional video editing) and Clare Blumer (editor).

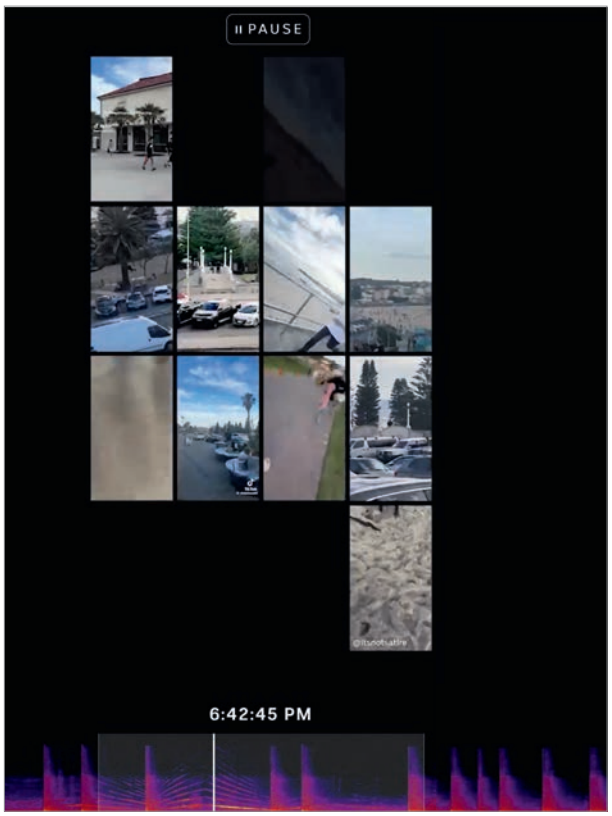
JUDGES' COMMENTS

This piece, which examines what more than 80 cameras reveal about the Bondi attack, is innovative reporting at its best – a remarkable combination of technology and journalism. Using the sounds of the gunshots as well as the videos taken from the scene, it meticulously examines the minutes that are now seared into the Australian consciousness. Using sound and vision as both verification tools and storytelling devices, the piece sets a new benchmark for bearing witness and recording the first draft of history.





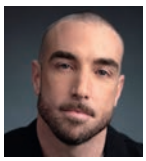




ALL MEDIA: SCOOP OF THE YEAR

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

Sean Rubinsztein-Dunlop, Olivia Caisley, Michael Workman, ABC Investigations, ABC News Online, *7.30*, 'Bondi: What ASIO Knew'





Just one day after Australia's deadliest terror attack, Sean Rubinsztein-Dunlop, Olivia Caisley and Michael Workman were able to exclusively break that Bondi gunman Naveed Akram had been investigated by ASIO over his extremist ties. After years of work exploring the resurgence of Islamic State (IS) in Australia, Rubinsztein-Dunlop could report, with credibility and efficiency, that Akram had been investigated in 2019 over ties to members of an IS cell.

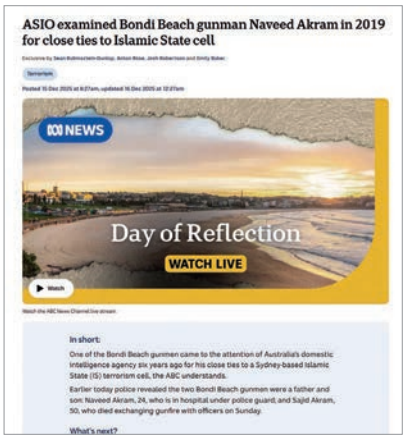
The story was released in the morning of 15 December on ABC News (Digital). Within hours, the prime minister confirmed that Akram had been investigated in 2019 and found not to be a threat. On a special hour-long *7.30*, Rubinsztein-Dunlop and Workman revealed Akram's links to other persons of interest, including spiritual leader Wisam Haddad and convicted IS recruiter Youssef Uweinat. The pair also found a video of a 17-year-old Akram preaching with IS supporters. Olivia Caisley corroborated details with security services.

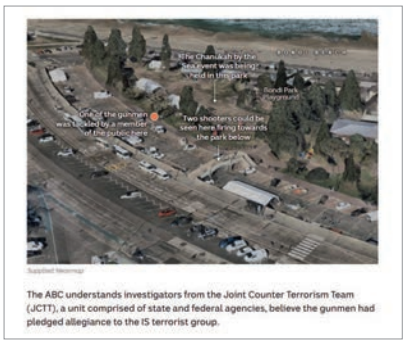
The scoop filled in crucial missing information in coverage of the event, and raised questions about the nation's security forces. The scrutiny that followed helped bring about the closure of Haddad's prayer hall and the eventual Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion.

Sean Rubinsztein-Dunlop is a Walkley-winning reporter with the ABC's Investigations team. Olivia Caisley is the ABC's defence and national security correspondent. Michael Workman is a reporter and researcher with ABC NEWS Verify.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

This scoop, published the morning after Australia's worst terrorist incident, highlights how years of investment in sources and subject expertise pays off. Rubinsztein-Dunlop revealed ASIO had investigated Naveed Akram in 2019. That night on *7.30*, he reported on Naveed's links to Wisam Haddad, with the team finding videos of 17-year-old Naveed preaching with IS supporters. This reporting raised serious questions about the vague statements made by Australia's intelligence services in the aftermath of Bondi, and helped prompt the royal commission that followed.







ALL MEDIA: COVERAGE OF A MAJOR NEWS EVENT OR ISSUE

7NEWS and Sunrise Team, *7NEWS*, *Sunrise*, 'Bondi Terror Attack'

When the reports of a terror attack in Bondi first came through, they were followed by confusion and conspiracy theories. As a result, reporting with strict adherence to the facts was of the utmost importance. The *7News* team delivered vital coverage of the unfolding events with speed and restraint.

Reporter Rex Quail, just three months into his first metro job, went live on the scene using Facetime, as camera crews were still en route. His reporting confirmed nationwide the seriousness of the incident, with Seven the first network to confirm that there had been a mass shooting.

Michael Usher and his team reported with calmness and clarity. Key information, including the number of people who had died and whether the toll would increase, were broken only when they could be confirmed. Graphic vision was not broadcast and the identity of the attacker was not reported, despite widespread speculation.

Chris Reason delivered powerful reporting on the ground, demonstrating both composure and humanity. Natalie Barr anchored *Sunrise* live from Bondi the next morning, guiding the nation through its grief.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

Seven's coverage of Australia's worst terror attack on home soil was an excellent example of a news team covering a horrifying major event responsibly and with authority. It was the first free-to-air TV network to start national rolling coverage, breaking into its news bulletin minutes after the final bullets were fired. The judges were particularly impressed with the composure of young reporter Rex Quail, who was near the scene with family and broadcast live using his phone until camera crews and more senior journalists arrived. The Seven team also broke exclusives, including identifying hero Ahmed Al Ahmed and securing an interview with his family.







NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY

Banjo McLachlan, *Daily Mail Australia*, ‘Documenting The Unthinkable: Coming Face-to-Face with the Bondi Beach Terrorists’



On 14 December 2025, freelance photographer Banjo McLachlan was wrapping up a job for the *Daily Mail* at North Bondi when a terrorist act unfolded in front of him. He secured the only clear photos of gunman Naveed Akram, armed with a Beretta .308 assault rifle, staring down the barrel of his lens before reloading, pivoting, gesturing to the other gunman, and opening fire again.

Close-range, high-resolution coverage of a terrorist attack is exceptionally rare. McLachlan faced extreme danger to document indelible, defining images of a dark chapter in Australia’s history. His pictures were immediately published in the *Daily Mail*’s live coverage and republished around the world.

Banjo McLachlan works as a freelance news photographer for the *Daily Mail*. He left school to pursue photography studies, working as a paparazzo before relocating to New York to expand his focus to documentary photography.

JUDGES’ COMMENTS

In an extremely dangerous situation, Banjo McLachlan went all in. For obvious reasons, it’s rare to see images of gunmen in action. People don’t get pictures like this in war zones, let alone Bondi. The sharp, clear and detailed images show just how close McLachlan was, demonstrating technical strength under incredible pressure and risk in a terrifying moment. Chilling images that echoed around the world.



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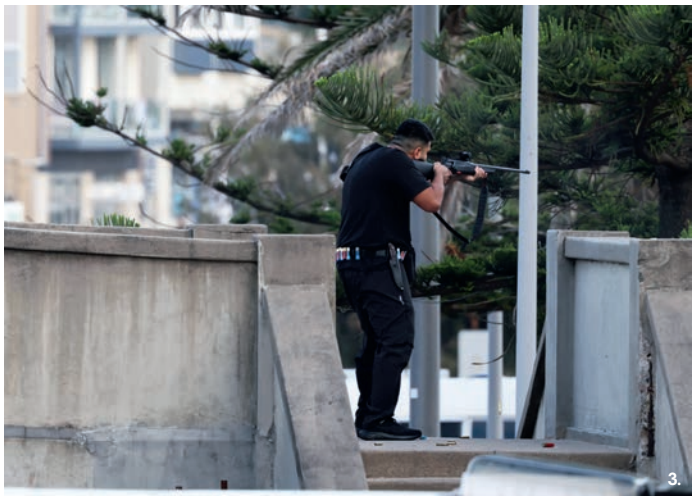

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1. **Courage under fire:** ‘There’s a .... shooting!’ Photographer Banjo McLachlan had barely gotten the words down the phone when Naveed Akram turned to face him, Beretta .308 assault rifle in hand.
2. **Bearing witness:** It was about an hour before sunset on 14 December 2025, and the worst terrorist attack in this country’s history was unfolding in front of McLachlan.
3. **Unmasking a ‘killer’:** Instead of running, McLachlan picked up his camera and took photos and video. Risking his life, the father of two secured the only clear photos of gunman Naveed Akram.

ALL MEDIA: SPECIALIST AND BEAT REPORTING

Julie Hare, *The Australian Financial Review, The Saturday Paper, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age*, 'ANU Governance Turmoil'



Julie Hare drew on decades of contacts and experience covering higher education to follow the unfolding crisis in leadership and governance at the Australian National University during 2025 and 2026. Using Freedom of Information requests, whistleblower leaks and thousands of hours of interviews to produce a series of scoops and exclusives, she brought to light the extraordinary implosion of one of Australia's most important national institutions.

Hare's reporting contributed to the resignations of the vice-chancellor, Genevieve Bell, in September 2025, as well as the chancellor, Julie Bishop, and five appointed council members in May 2026. The university's leadership has been subjected to multiple inquiries, including by the Australian National Audit Office and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency. An internal inquiry explored bullying and intimidation claims against Bell, Bishop and former pro-chancellor Alison Kitchen. A Senate inquiry into university governance paid particular attention to ANU, with 12 witnesses called.

Julie Hare has covered education, with a particular interest in the university sector, for nearly 30 years. During that time, she has worked as an editor, feature writer and journalist across the spectrum from the trade press to national daily mastheads.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

Julie Hare's sustained, news-breaking coverage of the Australian National University's multi-faceted governance turmoil was beat reporting at its finest and contributed to a number of high-level resignations. Hare's many years of legwork in the university sector got her the story, while her feature took us into the drama. She took on one of Australia's iconic institutions and exposed what went on in the face of sustained pressure and political pushback.



Policy Health & Education Workplace

From Silicon Valley to ANU: How Genevieve Bell's story hit a wall

She was the "feral kid from Australia" who went to Stanford and Intel; the rock-star scientist who took charge of ANU. Less than two years later, she's gone.

Genevieve Bell's troubled reign at ANU is emblematic of a wider governance failure at the top of Australian universities. Bethany Rae



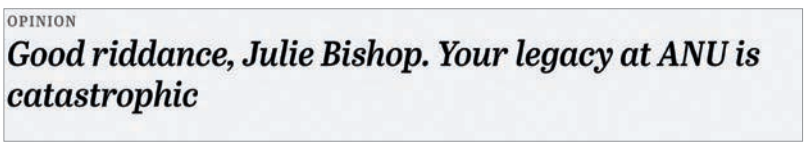
EDUCATION N° 595 April 11 – 17, 2026

Former ANU vice-chancellor Genevieve Bell has been suspended from the university and accused of serious misconduct after allegedly making a close friend a full professor despite him having no university qualifications.

By Julie Hare

Exclusive: Former ANU VC accused of 'serious misconduct'

Former ANU vice-chancellor Genevieve Bell, photographed by Professor Andrew Meares. CREDIT: NINE



OPINION

Good riddance, Julie Bishop. Your legacy at ANU is catastrophic

ALL MEDIA: BUSINESS JOURNALISM

Award Partner ING

Edmund Tadros, Hannah Wootton, *The Australian Financial Review*, 'KPMG Audit Leaks'





Edmund Tadros and Hannah Wootton revealed KPMG partners' conflicts of interest and misuse of confidential client information to win audit work, and its leadership's subsequent mistreatment of a whistleblower, plus efforts to mislead staff, regulators, clients and politicians in a botched cover-up attempt.

In December 2025, Wootton broke a whistleblower's allegations of misconduct at KPMG, revealing how auditors cheated on compliance testing. In March 2026, Tadros and Wootton reported further allegations. The pair exposed, via a network of contacts, the inadequate legal reports and misuse of legal professional privilege to deflect the allegations.

As a result, KPMG's CEO, chair and several executives and partners lost their jobs, and investigations were launched by federal and state parliaments and departments, several ASX companies, ASIC, the Tax Practitioners Board, and Chartered Accountants ANZ. Multiple governments and major companies have cut ties with KPMG. The reporting also kickstarted reforms that Labor had left unfinished after the PwC saga, which Tadros also revealed, to impose tougher standards on an opaque, multibillion-dollar sector.

Edmund Tadros is the *AFR*'s professional services editor, best known for his work with Neil Chenoweth in uncovering the PwC tax leaks scandal, which won the 2023 Gold Walkley. Hannah Wootton is a 'Rear Window' columnist at the paper.





JUDGES' COMMENTS

An outstanding example of how tenacious journalism exposed unethical behaviour in one of Australia's largest professional services firms. The reporting by Edmund Tadros and Hannah Wootton also unearthed conflicts of interest on the boards of large listed companies, and the spurious use of a legal firm to bury the allegations of whistleblowers. Tadros and Wootton exposed issues not in a single company but in the system as a whole, with implications for every Australian who invests, pays tax or has super. Their energetic coverage had serious repercussions for KPMG. It was the biggest story in Australian business in 2026.

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TV/VIDEO: CAMERAWORK

Andy Taylor, In Films, *Sentient*



Sometimes the best craft becomes invisible. The judges said they were so drawn in by *Sentient* that they often had to remind themselves to watch critically, with Andy Taylor's compelling cinematography and camera operation adding powerfully to the story.

The documentary explores the moral, emotional and clinical questions raised by laboratory testing on animals, following Dr Lisa Jones-Engel, a primatologist and now animal welfare advocate, at the University of Washington's primate research centre.

Taylor shot and lit alone, using an ARRI ALEXA Mini LF camera with Signature Prime lenses and aiming to produce beautiful and emotional imagery with high production values. He filmed with a long lens from a moving car from midnight to dawn to track a truck convoy in the dead of night; and a 400mm super-telephoto lens to capture crates of monkeys being packed and exported at the airport. Dark and mysterious surveillance sequences contrasted with harshly fluorescent-lit lab scenes, where Taylor had to shoot wearing full PPE under time and space constraints. He opted for handheld on many sequences to allow for an observational and fluid shooting style, while interview shots were composed and lit to capture the emotional toll of the experiments.

Andy Taylor is an ACS-accredited cinematographer. He was granted accreditation by the Australian Cinematographers Society in 2002 and inducted into the ACS Hall of Fame in 2024. His work has been recognised with more than 30 ACS Awards and five previous Walkley Awards.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

Andy Taylor's camerawork on the documentary *Sentient* is excellent. He takes us on a visual journey documenting the use of monkeys for medical testing, a subject that is at times hard to watch. His work is striking, right from the very first shots of bats flying out of a cave at sunset. From the dramatic opening sequences in Asia through to the picturesque gardens of the University of Washington campus, where animal testing is conducted in underground laboratories, his camerawork is visually superb.







TV/VIDEO: NEWS REPORTING

Award Partner Seven

Bridget Rollason, *ABC News*, 'ISIS brides return to Australia'



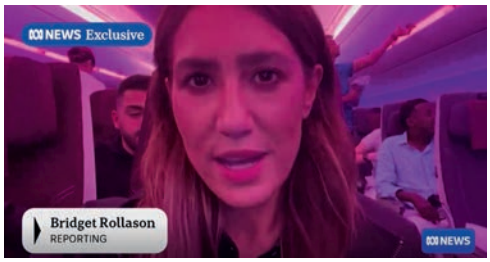
Bridget Rollason broke the news that four families of Australians with links to former ISIS fighters, the so-called 'ISIS brides' had left the Al-Roj refugee camp in Syria to attempt to return to Australia. The group spent two weeks stuck in Damascus, and when they finally secured flights, Rollason intercepted them in Doha and got a seat on the same flight to Melbourne. She built trust and secured their first on-the-record interview, filming with her phone as the group boarded the flight, then recording a piece to camera from her seat just rows away. She continued reporting throughout the flight.

When they landed in Melbourne, two women were arrested. Over 28 hours, without sleep, Rollason worked as reporter, producer and camera operator while filing continuously on a rapidly changing international story. The judges praised her work as a lone operator reporting this story for a long time, and the enduring images she captured.

Bridget Rollason is a correspondent for the ABC, based in London. She has worked for the ABC for 10 years, including as a political reporter, and has covered major stories across Europe. Rollason has also reported extensively from the Middle East, including multiple deployments to Israel to cover the war.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

Bridget Rollason demonstrated excellent journalism to break the news of the impending return of the so-called 'ISIS Brides'. She sourced information from an extremely remote area and built relationships with the women that resulted in access to them and exclusive first reports during their journey to Australia. Her tenacious and multiskilled approach to reporting saw her lead the coverage of a story of significant national interest.









TV/VIDEO: CURRENT AFFAIRS SHORT (UNDER 20 MINUTES)

Award Partner SBS

Michelle Elias, Jack Tulleners, Jodie Noyce, SBS, *The Feed*, 'Autism, Extremism and Recruitment'







In recent years, the Australian Federal Police has identified neurodiversity as a risk factor in the growing problem of youth radicalisation. *The Feed* team explored the intersection between autism, youth radicalisation and extremism in Australia, with engaging storytelling and exclusive interviews. They delivered a sophisticated, accessible story with high public interest.

The team went through multiple sources and used encrypted messages to obtain previously unpublished videos of Australian neo-Nazi Thomas Sewell openly discussing how the hyperfixations of young autistic men in his group could be channelled. The videos formed part of a fascinating examination of how these organisations are targeting young people with autism spectrum disorder.

They also examined how an undercover AFP officer "groomed" a 13-year-old boy with autism, who is now known as Thomas Carrick, feeding his Islamic State fixation. The AFP then charged him with terrorism-related offences. The case highlights how authorities need to improve their practices to distinguish between a child who needs intervention and one who poses a genuine threat. The report was a groundbreaking exploration of an urgent issue, done with originality, sensitivity and nuance.

Michelle Elias, Jack Tulleners and Jodie Noyce are an award-winning team from SBS. Elias is a producer and reporter for *The Feed*, Tulleners is a shooter-editor, and Noyce is *The Feed*'s executive producer.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

This investigation lifted the curtain on the chilling way neurodiverse teenagers are being targeted and radicalised. The team looked deeper into the issue via a personal story that was both informative and emotional. A well-produced current affairs report that dealt with a sensitive but very important topic in a delicate and respectful way.









TV/VIDEO: CURRENT AFFAIRS LONG (OVER 20 MINUTES)

Award Partner Pharmacy Guild of Australia

Dylan Welch, Elise Potaka, Amy Greenbank, ABC, *Four Corners*, 'Brutal Force'





In NSW, legal barriers have long shielded police's body-worn camera footage from public scrutiny, but this *Four Corners* investigation uncovered graphic footage and damning whistleblower testimony to expose officer misconduct, police brutality and systemic failures in police oversight.

Over six months, Dylan Welch, Elise Potaka and Amy Greenbank spoke to more than 200 people, including serving and former police officers, complainants, lawyers and academics. Using open-source scraping tools, they analysed tens of thousands of court judgments spanning more than a decade and reviewed more than 500 matters involving body-worn camera footage, mobile phone footage or police station CCTV.

The shocking centrepiece was previously unseen video of Jodi Knott, naked and experiencing a mental health crisis, being assaulted by police. Greenbank pursued access to the footage through the courts, submitting petitions from more than a dozen members of Knott's extended family, and arguing the public interest case in person.

Within 24 hours of the broadcast, a senior NSW Police officer apologised for the conduct exposed in the program. By August, NSW Police mandated activating body-worn cameras whenever officers exercise police powers, and the NSW government announced people in mental health emergencies would be dealt with by healthcare workers, rather than police.

ABC journalists Elise Potaka, Amy Greenbank and Dylan Welch are the team behind the *Four Corners* documentary 'Brutal Force'.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

This was compelling reporting. NSW Police called the *Four Corners* footage "a highlight reel of us being at our worst". The program increased pressure on NSW Police to mandate activation of body-worn cameras when officers are exercising their powers. Disturbing and powerful, 'Brutal Force' does exactly what truth-to-power journalism should do.







The Pharmacy Guild of Australia

Congratulations to all the 2026 winners and finalists

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ALL MEDIA: INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISM

Stephanie March, Naomi Selvaratnam and Leah Donovan, with Shrouq Ali and Jaber Badwan (Gaza), ABC, *Foreign Correspondent*, 'Gaza Children of War'

foreign CORRESPONDENT

UNICEF has labelled Gaza "the most dangerous place in the world to be a child", but it required a massive effort to take Australian viewers beyond the overwhelming numbers and into the human reality. 'Gaza Children of War' was a unique, long-term collaboration between the Australia-based *Foreign Correspondent* team and journalists stuck inside Gaza who risked their lives every day to give voice to families, and children in particular.

Working around Israel's ban on foreign media entering Gaza, the *Foreign Correspondent* team worked with two trusted Palestinian journalists, Shrouq Ali and Jaber Badwan, to find and vet families to appear on camera. They shot for months, through famine and an unprecedented heatwave, all while Israeli forces were targeting journalists and hospitals. The Australian team coordinated and directed filming and interviews, translating hours of footage.

The result was excellent if harrowing viewing, extraordinarily shot and beautifully put together, with strong public benefit for Australian audiences. A story that a state didn't want the world to see, framed by a team of Australian journalists, centring the humanity of Gaza's children. When Australians felt their empathy burned out by the relentlessness of the conflict, *Foreign Correspondent* brought a new dimension to the story to ensure the world does not look away.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

In a very strong field of international story coverage, *Foreign Correspondent*'s 'Gaza Children of War' stood out for the bravery of the Gazan journalists who revealed stories of hunger and suffering in a hostile environment. This was unique storytelling, driven and coordinated by the team in Australia who, as foreign journalists, are not allowed into Gaza to tell these sorts of stories. This piece gave Australians a raw and painful glimpse of unimaginable hardship and challenges.

"Gaza is not a place for children right now but it's home to a million of them."

— James Elder, UNICEF







FEATURE/PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Sam Mooy, *The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age*, 'Kumanjayi Little Baby and the Alice Springs Riots'



Five-year-old Kumanjayi Little Baby had been missing for four days when Sam Mooy arrived in Alice Springs. He captured the township's frantic search and connected with her relatives, including her grandmother, who tearfully shared stories about her granddaughter.

After the child's body was found on the outskirts of town, Mooy located the crime scene and filed images of Northern Territory Police and forensics shielding her body from view with a tarpaulin. Later that night, he and colleague Hannah Murphy followed rioters to Alice Springs Hospital, where Kumanjayi's alleged killer, 47-year-old Jefferson Lewis, was being treated under police guard after his arrest. A crowd grew outside the hospital, Elders weeping and mourning, protesters demanding access to serve community justice. Protesters hurled rocks, bricks and fireworks at police, who responded for hours with waves of tear gas, rubber bullets and charging at rioters.

Mooy showed the anguish of a distraught community, both in moments of heartbreak and stillness, and the rage of protest.

Sydney Morning Herald staff photographer Sam Mooy documents breaking news, sport, features and environmental stories for the publication. With 25 years' experience in the Asia-Pacific region, Mooy has worked as a senior staff photographer at *The Australian* and undertaken reportage for Getty Images, Nine Newspapers and Australian Associated Press. This is his first Walkley.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

A brave series of images from a highly charged environment, where Sam Mooy managed to cover a range of situations and emotions. With great reflexes and technical skills, he got shots with strong composition and dramatic use of lighting amid the chaos. Mooy was in the thick of the action, but he also wove in moving perspectives from the periphery.



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1. **"I love that little girl":** Grandmother Peggy Rockman Granites cries as she remembers her granddaughter Kumanjayi Little Baby at the Old Timers Camp, as members of the Northern Territory Police and emergency services volunteers continue the search for the missing five-year-old in Alice Springs, Northern Territory. – Thursday 30 April 2026.
2. **Kumanjayi found:** Members of the Northern Territory Police and forensic science team shield the child's body during the removal from the crime scene following the death of five-year-old Kumanjayi Little Baby.
3. **"F*ck the cops":** Protesters stand off with police.
4. **Rage:** A protester takes to a police vehicle windscreen.
5. **Police under fire:** Northern Territory Police run for safety as a police van is set alight by community members protesting outside the Alice Springs Hospital following the arrest of Jefferson Lewis.
6. **Eye gouge arrest:** A protester is eye-gouged during an arrest on the grounds of the Alice Springs Hospital.
7. **Gas gas gas:** Tear gas is deployed across the grounds of the Alice Springs Hospital by Northern Territory Police.
8. **Reaction and rage:** Protesters take to a police vehicle windscreen, jumping on the vehicle and attempting to set it on fire during the town riot.
9. **Reactionary fire:** A Northern Territory Police sniper aims at protestors with rubber bullets.
10. **Grief:** Protesters wail with grief.
11. **"Let us in and we'll sort him out":** Protesters stand off with Northern Territory Police, demanding to be let into the hospital to serve community justice.
12. **A town mourns:** Five-year-old Hendricks Alosio lays a flower tribute at the home of Kumanjayi Little Baby.

DOCUMENTARY AWARD

Tony Jones, Ivan O'Mahoney, Rachel Grierson-Johns, *Sentient,* In Films







Sentient explores the use of animals in laboratory settings, with breathtaking access to the largest primate lab in the US despite the bio-medical industry's traditional suspicion of the media. The film combines interviews and lab sequences shot at the University of Washington in Seattle, with covert night shoots and undercover footage from a UK testing lab. In the US alone, 40,000 monkeys are used in laboratories each year. Most are imported from huge monkey-breeding farms in South-East Asia, a multimillion dollar business.

This is a journalistic documentary, directed and written by journalist Tony Jones, produced by Ivan O'Mahoney and co-written and edited by Rachel Grierson-Johns. While the story focuses on the central arc of animal research scientist Dr Lisa Jones-Engel, and her shift into animal welfare advocacy, hers is just one of multiple perspectives in the film. Researchers and scientists still active in the industry give voice to the moral complexities of the potential benefits of testing weighed against the toll on the animals.



Tony Jones is a veteran reporter and former host of ABC programs such as *Lateline* and *Q&A*. Independent documentary filmmaker Ivan O'Mahoney is the founder of In Films. Rachel Grierson is an Emmy-winning documentary editor.

JUDGES' COMMENTS

Sentient explores the moral and clinical questions that surround the use of animals in experimental medicine. A major strength of this documentary is the compelling story arc – following the main character going through a transition from animal tester to animal welfare advocate. Covert footage and testimony from former lab workers evoke sadness and horror and help build a very powerful and emotional narrative, assisted by some excellent editing.



WALKLEY BOOK AWARD

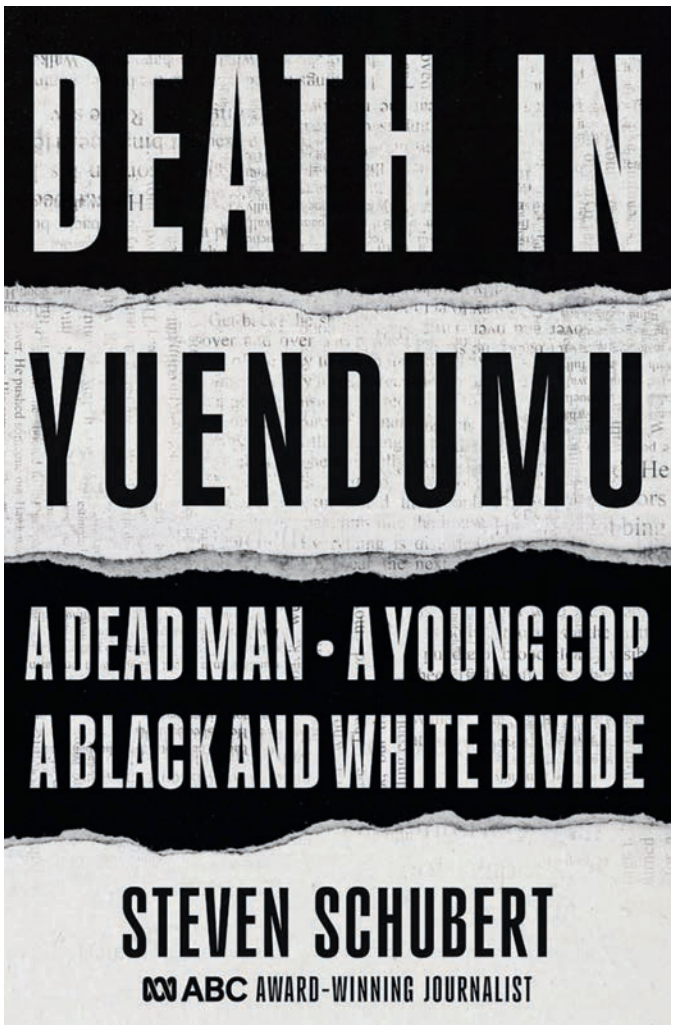
Steven Schubert, *Death in Yuendumu*, HarperCollins Publishers



Hours after his grandfather's funeral in the remote Northern Territory community of Yuendumu, 19-year-old Warlpiri man Kumanjayi Walker was dead. He was shot three times by police constable Zachary Rolfe during an attempted arrest, after Walker had stabbed the officer in the shoulder with a pair of surgical scissors. Three days later, Rolfe was charged with murder, the first time a police officer had been charged for killing a First Nations person in the Northern Territory in 130 years. After Rolfe was acquitted, he made sensational allegations about institutional racism within the police force at a coronial inquest.

Steven Schubert broke the story of the shooting as an ABC reporter, and in *Death in Yuendumu* he contextualises the tragedy of Walker's death within the systems that led to it. The book is built on Schubert's years of careful cultivation of contacts and cultural knowledge during his years of living and reporting in the NT. Schubert worked closely with the community's Elders, prioritising the informed consent of contacts and respect for their boundaries. He explores the multiple facets of the story and situates them within a broader history of colonisation: a young Indigenous man with a difficult past and uncertain future; an ex-military policeman who became mired in allegations of misconduct; a family in mourning; and a community fighting for justice.

Steven Schubert is an award-winning journalist based in Alice Springs. He authored *Mandatory Murder* about the jailing of Zak Grieve for murder despite evidence that he was not there, and won the NT Journalist of the Year Award in 2018 for his coverage of that case and police investigations into Indigenous murders in the Northern Territory.



JUDGES' COMMENTS

Steven Schubert's *Death in Yuendumu* is Australian journalism at its best. Schubert investigates the 2019 fatal shooting of Indigenous teenager Kumanjayi Walker by white police officer Zachary Rolfe in the Northern Territory. He does so with objectivity and without judgement. His open-minded engagement with the town, Indigenous culture and police procedure allows him to tell all sides of a tragic and complex story that should be read by every Australian.

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO JOURNALISM

Tony Wright

Tony Wright has dedicated more than 50 years to journalism, starting his journey in 1970 at the *Portland Observer and Guardian*, an independent newspaper in south-west Victoria. Along the way, he has worked at *Canberra News, Western District Newspapers, The Border Mail, The Canberra Times, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age* (twice) and *The Bulletin.* He has covered every election, scandal and leadership coup since Paul Keating brought down Bob Hawke in 1991.

Wright's long career has been shaped by his curiosity, compassion and unflagging energy. He has that rare ability to grasp the arc of history, while recognising significant turning points in moments of the now. The key is his humanity and humour, and his flair for putting people at the centre of the story.

Wright won the 2020 Walkley Award for Commentary, Analysis, Opinion and Critique with three COVID-era columns for *The Age*: "You learn a bit working on a local paper. It's all about the people", "The tragedy of Mary and William, and a federation in chaos again" and "The vaccines that saved the rock 'n' roll generation, and many more". During COVID, he and *Age* journalist Simone Fox Koob found the stories of the dozens of people in Victorian nursing homes who were dying unsung deaths, and wrote their songs for all to hear.

His travel memoir *Turn Right at Istanbul: A Walk on the Gallipoli Peninsula* (2003) explores the thoughts and feelings of the young Australians and New Zealanders who each year make the trek to the 1915 battlefield. *Bad Ground: Inside the Beaconsfield Mine Rescue* (2007), written with miners Todd Russell and Brant Webb, tells the story of the 14-day entombment and rescue of Russell and Webb, two of the survivors of the blast and rockfall at the Tasmanian mine.

As well as his craft as a writer, which sees letters from readers land most weeks, Wright is beloved by those he has worked with as a mentor and inspiration. In the *Age* newsroom he is sometimes called the "soul" of the place, often by younger staff. Colleagues and readers laud him as a national treasure, or the "sage of *The Age*".

Formerly Wright was associate editor and special writer at *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, where he wrote a weekly column. In August 2026, Wright stepped back from daily duties at *The Age*, but his columns will continue, along with his legacy and his legend.

"Tony Wright has been performing this magic trick effortlessly, or so it seems, for such a long period of time that we can be forgiven for forgetting how incredibly hard it is to achieve this standard of journalism, let alone sustain it as Tony has."

Bryan Dawe, satirist, author, actor

"He has what we should all aspire to – the undervalued knack of striking up a conversation with anyone, learning from them, and telling their story with empathy and power."

David Crowe, Europe correspondent, *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*

"For most of his life he wrote for a media family, but he was never owned by them. His complicity could not be bought – the quality of his journalism came from inner commands."

Paul Keating, Prime Minister of Australia 1991–1996

"What amazes me most is that 50 years down the journalism track, Tony's still as keen as on day one in Portland."

Greg Baum, former chief sports columnist and associate editor, *The Age*





"Crafting words in a way that impresses an emotion upon the reader, calling on them to feel something, is pivotal to good journalism. Tony's great ability is to do this across a broad range of issues. Tony and I often sparred during his period in the press gallery while I was both treasurer and prime minister. Neither of us was shy about sharing our opinions with each other..."

Paul Keating, Prime Minister of Australia 1991–1996

"Tony Wright over a long career has made politics interesting. This is often quite a challenge. At the same time as he reported what had happened, he was able to describe the unusual personalities in politics, their foibles and their follies. Our nation's story needs storytellers. People who can weave into an otherwise dull catalogue of events a little poetry, wit and wry amusement at human folly. Tony has been one of the best and for a long career."

Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister of Australia 2015–2018

"Tony has covered every election, scandal and leadership coup this nation has seen since Paul Keating brought down Bob Hawke in 1991. That history, that knowledge, gives his journalism rare depth and perspective. But always, at the centre, are the people."

Patrick Elligett, editor of *The Age* and **Jordan Baker**, editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, nominating Tony Wright

"Tony's great skill is his ability to see the humanity in politics, the one person in the great tragedy, the point of it all in the chaos... The readers of The Age *and* The Sydney Morning Herald *rely on Tony's account of the big moments. He has extracted the personal from the brutal politics of spills and elections and he's skewered self-importance with a deftness only his generosity allows."*

Tory Maguire, managing director, publishing, Nine



"Throughout his career Tony has been a mentor as well as an example to young journalists, guiding them while treating them as equals. With his colleagues generally, he is supportive and collegiate, always up for a chat or to give a helping hand."

Michelle Grattan, chief political correspondent, *The Conversation*

"If Tony writes it, you can believe it."

Chris Hammer, author



"After more than 40 years in journalism, Tony has lost none of his enthusiasm but has gathered a thousand anecdotes that he can use to put the latest story into perspective. While many other older reporters are trapped in the corner by their own cynicism, Tony is still keen to learn and communicate. He is a news breaker, a colour writer, historian and Aussie yarn teller. His stories on federal politics resonate because he refuses to be trapped in Canberra. This means Tony always writes for us, not them."

John Silvester, crime and law editor, *The Age*



Opposite: Tony in 2019.
PHOTO: SIMON SCHLUTER.

From top: Tony Wright (then with *The Border Mail*, Albury) [L] with *The Age* journalist Andrew Rule [R] at the City Court after the shooting of Chuck Bennett. 12 November, 1979.
PHOTO: *THE AGE* ARCHIVES.

Former Prime Minister Bob Hawke and Tony Wright during the launch of the book *Albanese: Telling it Straight* at Parliament House in Canberra. 1 September 2016.
PHOTO: ALEX ELLINGHAUSEN.

Tony Wright on his motorcycle, 2019.
PHOTO: SIMON SCHLUTER.

Tony Wright rests his eyes on a RAAF C17 Globemaster during the 2013 election campaign. PHOTO: ANDREW MEARES

71st WALKLEY AWARD FINALISTS

PRINT/TEXT: NEWS REPORT

Award Partner MinterEllison

- **Sherryn Groch, Rachael Dexter**, *The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'The Great "March for Australia" Deception'
- **Sarah Martin**, *Guardian Australia*, 'Pauline Hanson and Gina Rinehart – Undeclared Flights'
- **Chris Vedelago, Marta Pascual Juanola**, *The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'The Billion-Dollar Move Crime Boss Made For Australia's Top Illicit Cigarette Brand'

PRINT/TEXT: FEATURE WRITING SHORT (UNDER 4000 WORDS)

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

- **Jonathan Barrett**, *Guardian Australia*, 'A Child Goes To Bed And Doesn't Wake Up': The families left in shock after the sudden death of their healthy children'
- **Patrick Begley**, *The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald*, '"Schoolboy maths": How Australian gamblers beat the Texas lottery'
- **Sam Buckingham-Jones**, *Australian Financial Review*, 'Maccas in a Rolls: Inside Kyle Sandilands' pivot to $100 tradie plans'

PRINT/TEXT: FEATURE WRITING LONG (OVER 4000 WORDS)

- **Melissa Fyfe, Carla Hildebrandt**, *Good Weekend Magazine – The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Virginia: The Final Chapter'
- **Sarah Martin**, *Guardian Australia*, 'Inside One Nation'
- **Ben Smee**, *Guardian Australia*, '"Starting to frighten me": The final weeks of Hannah Clarke's life'

ALL MEDIA: COMMENTARY, ANALYSIS, OPINION AND CRITIQUE

Award Partner Thomsons

- **David Leser**, *The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'The Bondi Massacre and Its Aftermath'
- **Kylie Moore-Gilbert**, *The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Body of Work'
- **Isabelle Oderberg**, *The Jewish Independent*, 'Body of Work'

ALL MEDIA: EXPLANATORY JOURNALISM

- **Myriam Robin**, *Australian Financial Review*, 'Christian Brothers Gifted Property Worth $2b to Schools Before Collapse'
- **The Visual Stories Team: Oil project**, *The Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Brisbane Times* and *WA Today*, 'How Much Oil Do We Use?'
- **Tobacco War Team**, *The Age, Sydney Morning Herald, Brisbane Times* and *WA Today*, 'Australia's Illegal Tobacco Trade'

ALL MEDIA: COVERAGE OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Award Partner National Indigenous Times

- **ABC News Story Lab**, *ABC News Online*, 'Deep Time'
- **Cason Ho, Hayden Smith, Andy Burns, Charlotte King**, *ABC News Online*, 'A Cry For Help'
- **Ben Smee & the Guardian Australia Team**, *Guardian Australia*, 'The Betrayal of Kardell Lomas'

ALL MEDIA: COVERAGE OF COMMUNITY & REGIONAL AFFAIRS

Award Partner BHP

- **Matt Garrick, Elsie Lange, Xavier Martin**, ABC NT, *ABC News, ABC News Online*, 'Alice Springs Riot Coverage'
- **Donna Page**, *Newcastle Herald*, 'Anthony Di Nardo: 19 charges, eight alleged victims over 20 years'
- **Ann Wason Moore**, *Gold Coast Bulletin*, 'Giaan's Final Wish'

ALL MEDIA: CARTOON OF THE YEAR

Award Partner Banki Haddock Fiora

- **Matt Golding**, *The Age*, 'Operation Epic Outsourcing'
- **Megan Herbert**, *The Age*, 'Discarded'
- **David Rowe**, *The Australian Financial Review*, 'Bondi'

ALL MEDIA: SPORTS JOURNALISM

Award Partner University of Queensland

- **Jay Clark**, *Herald Sun*, 'Geelong Cats' Secret Concussion Contract'
- **Jessica Halloran, Amy Donaldson, Wendy Carlisle, Dylan Welch**, ABC, *Four Corners*, and ABC Investigations, 'Collision'
- **Sam Koslowski, Emma Gillespie, Orla Maher**, *The Daily Aus*, 'The AFL's First Openly Bisexual Player'

PHOTOGRAPHY: SPORT PHOTOGRAPHY

- **Michael Klein**, *Herald Sun*, News Corp Australia, 'Klein's Folio of Work'
- **Marina Neil**, *Newcastle Herald*, 'Surging Sergis Soars'
- **Quinn Rooney**, Getty Images, 'The Beauty of Sport'

RADIO/AUDIO: AUDIO SHORT (UNDER 20 MINUTES)

Award Partner ABC

- **Matthew Doran**, ABC *AM*, 'War in Gaza'
- **Hamish Macdonald, Mark Tobin, Jemima Huston, Georgie Carroll**, ABC, *702 Sydney Mornings*, 'Gendered Violence Against Women In Australian Politics'
- **Adam Stephen**, ABC *Regional Queensland Drive*, *Queensland Evenings*, Radio National's *Country Breakfast*, *Queensland Country Hour*, *NSW Country Hour*, 'Exposing Australia's Illegal Fishing Crisis'

RADIO/AUDIO: AUDIO LONG (OVER 20 MINUTES)

- **Andy Burns, Charlotte King with Background Briefing and Regional Investigations team,** ABC, *Background Briefing,* 'Hometown Boys'
- **Josh Robertson, Maddison Connaughton and the Background Briefing team,** ABC, *Background Briefing,* 'The Road to Bondi'
- **The Unravel: Huntsman Team**, ABC Listen, 'Unravel: Huntsman'

DIGITAL MEDIA: INNOVATION JOURNALISM

- **ABC Digital Story Innovations Team**, *ABC News Online*, 'This Is What 84 Cameras Reveal About the Bondi Attack'
- **Darling Harbour Visual Story Team**, *The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Brisbane Times, WAtoday*, 'Darling Harbour'
- **Matt Martino, Michael Workman, Lucy Carter**, *ABC News Online*, 'Foreign Facebook Accounts Using AI Pauline Hanson to Manipulate Australians'

ALL MEDIA: SCOOP OF THE YEAR

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

- **Michael Foley, Paul Sakkal**, *The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age*, 'Barnaby Joyce to Defect to One Nation'
- **Nick McKenzie**, *The Age*, '$15 billion and the Cover Up That Caused a Royal Commission'
- **Sean Rubinsztein-Dunlop, Olivia Caisley, Michael Workman**, ABC Investigations, *ABC News Online*, *7.30*, 'Bondi: What ASIO Knew'

ALL MEDIA: COVERAGE OF A MAJOR NEWS EVENT OR ISSUE

- **7NEWS and Sunrise Team**, *7NEWS, Sunrise*, 'Bondi Terror Attack'
- **Nick McKenzie, Kieran Rooney, Lachlan Abbott, Garry McNab**, *The Age, 60 Minutes*, 'The Big Bill and the Fall of Jacinta Allan'
- **Liam Mendes, Paige Taylor, Christine Middap, Ellie Dudley**, *The Australian*, 'Kumanjayi Little Baby'

PHOTOGRAPHY: NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY

- **Gera Kazakov**, *NT News*, 'Alice Springs Riot: Ben and Bianca's tender moment'
- **Banjo McLachlan**, *Daily Mail Australia*, 'Documenting The Unthinkable: Coming face-to-face with the Bondi Beach terrorists'
- **Edwina Pickles**, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Bondi Beach Terror Attack'

ALL MEDIA: SPECIALIST AND BEAT REPORTING

- **Josh Hanrahan, Mark Morri**, *The Daily Telegraph*, 'Bondi Terror Attack Coverage'
- **Julie Hare**, *Australian Financial Review, The Saturday Paper, SMH, The Age*, 'ANU Governance Turmoil'
- **Steven Trask**, *AFP Newswire*, 'Security, Smuggling and Rising Seas: Foreign affairs in the Pacific'

ALL MEDIA: BUSINESS JOURNALISM

Award Partner ING Australia

- **Nick McKenzie, Cameron Houston, Garry McNab**, Nine, *The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald, 60 Minutes*, 'The Fall of a Security Giant'
- **Daniel Mercer, Neil Chenoweth, Alex Lim, Kit Mochan**, *ABC News Online*, ABC *The Business*, 'Shell Game: How Australian gas giants use Singapore to reduce taxes'
- **Edmund Tadros, Hannah Wootton**, *The Australian Financial Review*, 'KPMG Audit Leaks'

PHOTOGRAPHY: FEATURE/ PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY

- **Flavio Brancaleone**, *The Sydney Morning Herald, Reuters, AAP*, 'Bondi: After the Attack'
- **Sam Mooy**, *The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age*, 'Kumanjayi Little Baby and the Alice Springs Riots'
- **Edwina Pickles**, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Bondi Beach Terror Attack'

TELEVISION/VIDEO: CAMERAWORK

- **Dean Brosche**, SBS, 'Australia's Greatest Conman?'
- **Aaron Smith**, Northern Pictures/ABC, ABC TV, Prime Video UK, 'Rolf Harris: Primetime Predator and The Matter of Facts'
- **Andy Taylor**, In Films, *Sentient*

TELEVISION/VIDEO: NEWS REPORTING

Award Partner 7NEWS

- **Sharri Markson**, *News24*, 'Bondi Terror Attack'
- **Chris Reason**, *7News*, 'Iran War'
- **Bridget Rollason**, *ABC News*, 'ISIS Brides Return to Australia'

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

Award Partner SBS

- **Michelle Elias, Jodie Noyce, Jack Tulleners**, SBS, *The Feed*, 'Autism, Extremism and Recruitment'
- **Matt Garrick, Emily Jane Smith, Xavier Martin**, ABC, *7.30*, 'NT Tragedy: The alleged murder of Kumanjayi Little Baby'
- **Scobie McKay, Jennifer Luu, Jasmine Rule**, ABC Creators Program, YouTube, 'The Influencers Humiliating Themselves for Illegal Gambling Cash'

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

Award Partner The Pharmacy Guild of Australia

- **ABC Investigations and Four Corners Team**, ABC, *Four Corners* and ABC Investigations, 'Bondi: Path to Terror'
- **Jessica Halloran, Amy Donaldson, Wendy Carlisle, Dylan Welch**, ABC, *Four Corners*, 'Collision'
- **Dylan Welch, Elise Potaka, Amy Greenbank**, ABC, *Four Corners*, 'Brutal Force'

ALL MEDIA: INTERNATIONAL

- **Prue Lewarne, Pru Kingsmill**, SBS, *World News* 'Congo's War'
- **Stephanie March**, **Naomi Selvaratnam**, **Leah Donovan -** with Shrouq Ali and Jaber Badwan (Gaza), ABC, *Foreign Correspondent*, 'Gaza Children of War'
- **Vanessa Marsh**, News Corp Australia, *The Daily Telegraph, The Courier-Mail, Herald Sun, Adelaide Advertiser*, 'News from America'

ALL MEDIA: INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Award Partner Guardian Australia

- **Nick McKenzie**, *The Age, 60 Minutes*, 'Gatto's Rise and a Premier's Fall'
- **Sean Rubinsztein-Dunlop, Kyle Taylor**, *ABC News Online, Four Corners*, 'Reawakening: Investigating the resurgence of ISIS and the Bondi attack'
- **Edmund Tadros, Hannah Wootton**, *Australian Financial Review*, 'KPMG Audit Leaks'

WALKLEY DOCUMENTARY AWARD

- *The Hunt for the Last Nazis*, **Dan Goldberg, Craig Graham, Mark Middis, David Roach,** Mint Pictures / SBS
- *Sentient*, **Tony Jones, Ivan O'Mahoney, Rachel Grierson-Johns**, In Films
- *We Are Jeni*, **Simon Nasht, Mariel Thomas, Akhim Dev, Karin Steininger,** Smith&Nasht/ SBS, HBO Max US and UK

WALKLEY BOOK AWARD

- **Martin McKenzie-Murray**, *Sirens*, Black Inc.
- **Steven Schubert**, *Death in Yuendumu*, HarperCollins Publishers
- **Paul Toohey**, *The Fatal Island*, Simon & Schuster

PHOTOGRAPHY: NIKON-WALKLEY PRESS PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

Award Partner Nikon

- **Flavio Brancaleone**, Freelance, *Newswire, The Sydney Morning Herald, AAP, Reuters*
- **Jason Edwards**, *Herald Sun*
- **Sam Mooy**, *The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age*

NIKON PHOTO OF THE YEAR PRIZE



Edwina Pickles, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, ‘Bondi Beach Terror Attack’



The Nikon Photo of the Year is chosen from all the images entered in the Walkley photographic categories.

The biggest story of the year produced the most striking images of the year, but the judges were most struck by Edwina Pickles’ photograph of the aftermath of the Bondi Beach terror attack. Pickles’ powerful photo captures a chilling scene that encapsulates the horror of the biggest news event in Australia in the past year.

Showing the bodies of Boris and Sofia Gurman, a couple killed while attempting to disarm one of the shooters, this is an image layered with elements of the story. The image has many layers in terms of both the composition and the emotions.

Pickles entered this single shot in News Photography as one photo she believed told the story by itself.

“This image honours the dead without immortalising the terrorists, and it powerfully captures the horror and despair of the first responders and eyewitnesses.”

Edwina Pickles is a staff photographer at *The Sydney Morning Herald*. She photographs across the newspaper, from breaking news to sport and features. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in photography from the University of Sydney. This image was also a 2026 World Press Photo Contest winner.

NIKON PORTRAIT PRIZE



Steven Siewert, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, ‘Richard Scolyer’



Upon being diagnosed with aggressive glioblastoma brain cancer, Dr Richard Scolyer underwent world-first experimental treatments based on his own pioneering melanoma research. Photographer Steven Siewert says: “Dr Scolyer chose to live a public life as patient and researcher, embodying both hope and struggle, and pioneering endeavour. The scars he bears from multiple surgeries mark that intersection.” Siewert’s portrait was published in December 2025. Dr Scolyer died in June 2026.

The judges said: “Steven Siewert’s great strength as a photographer is zooming in to the essence of a person and bringing humanity to an image. Even if you don’t know the back story, the composition and particularly that pure, velvety black draws your eye into the subject. And it’s both beautiful and confronting: where his hair is shaved away, his scar. The subject’s eye shows him in deep thought. We’re used to seeing Richard Scolyer depicted as warm and optimistic. But he’s been facing his own mortality for so long and this is a rare glimpse of his vulnerability.”

Steven Siewert has told stories from behind the camera lens for more than three decades working for *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Siewert is the recipient of several national awards including the 2008 Walkley for Photographic Essay and now three Nikon-Walkley Portrait Prizes.

The 71st **Walkley Awards**
for excellence in journalism

Almost 50 years of Gold Walkley winners

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

1978	Catherine Martin, *The West Australian*
1979	Ron Tandberg, *The Age*
1980	Leslie Grant Heading, ABC TV Hobart
1981	John Lewis, *The Newcastle Herald*
1982	Kerry O'Brien, ATN Channel 7
1983	Mary Delahunty and Alan Hall, *Four Corners*, ABC TV
1984	Jan Mayman, freelance
1985	Chris Masters and Bruce Belsham, *Four Corners*, ABC TV
1986	Ron Tandberg, *The Age*
1987	Phil Dickie, *The Courier-Mail*
1988	Norman Swan, ABC TV
1989	Alan Tate and Paul Bailey, *The Sydney Morning Herald*
1990	Janet Hawley, *Good Weekend*
1991	Monica Attard, ABC Radio
1992	Jenny Brockie, ABC TV
1993	Phillip Chubb and Sue Spencer, ABC TV
1994	Peter McEvoy, ABC Radio National
1995	David Bentley, *The Courier-Mail*
1996	Peter Hartcher, *The Australian Financial Review*
1997	Mary-Louise O'Callaghan, *The Australian*
1998	Pamela Williams, *The Australian Financial Review*
1999	Richard Ackland, Deborah Richards and Anne Connolly, *Media Watch*, ABC TV
2000	Mark Davis, *Dateline*, SBS TV
2001	Andrew Rule, *The Age*
2002	Anne Davies and Kate McClymont, *The Sydney Morning Herald*
2003	Richard Moran, *National Nine News*
2004	Neil Chenoweth, Shraga Elam, Colleen Ryan, Andrew Main and Rosemarie Graffagnini, *The Australian Financial Review*
2005	Tim Palmer, ABC TV
2006	Liz Jackson, Lin Buckfield and Peter Cronau, *Four Corners*, ABC TV
2007	Hedley Thomas, *The Australian*
2008	Ross Coulthart and Nick Farrow, *Sunday*
2009	Gary Hughes, *The Australian*
2010	Laurie Oakes, Nine Network
2011	Sarah Ferguson, Michael Doyle and Anne Worthington, *Four Corners*, ABC TV
2012	Steve Pennells, *The West Australian*
2013	Joanne McCarthy, *The Newcastle Herald*
2014	Adele Ferguson, Deb Masters and Mario Christodoulou, *Four Corners* and Fairfax Media
2015	Caro Meldrum-Hanna, Sam Clark and Max Murch, *Four Corners*, ABC TV
2016	Andrew Quilty, freelance / *Foreign Policy*
2017	Michael Bachelard and Kate Geraghty, Fairfax Media
2018	Hedley Thomas and Slade Gibson, *The Australian*
2019	Anthony Dowsley and Patrick Carlyon, *Herald Sun*
2020	Mark Willacy and the ABC TV Investigations-*Four Corners* Team
2021	Samantha Maiden, news.com.au
2022	Anne Connolly, Ali Russell and Stephanie Zillman, ABC *Four Corners*
2023	Neil Chenoweth and Edmund Tadros, *The Australian Financial Review*
2024	Building Bad team, *The Age, Sydney Morning Herald, Australian Financial Review* and *60 Minutes*, Nine
2025	Adele Ferguson and Chris Gillett, ABC, *Four Corners, 7.30, ABC News* online
2026	Nick McKenzie, *The Age*, *60 Minutes*

The **Walkley** Foundation