

Statement by the Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia (JERAA) about the decision by the Walkley Awards Committee to scrap the 'International Journalism' category from the 2017 Awards.

3rd July 2017

Dear members of the Walkley Awards Committee,

We are writing on behalf of members of the Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia (JERAA) to express our objection to the decision to exclude the category of 'International Journalism' from this year's Walkley Awards.

As journalism educators we fully acknowledge the need to embrace the changing nature of journalism in a multiplatform environment, however certain genres of reporting deserve to be recognised for the particular skills, risks and importance of the role performed – reportage by Australian foreign correspondents in the international arena is one of those important genres.

In the announcement made by the Walkley Advisory Board about the changes, it is difficult to discern the rationale for removing international reporting on the one hand, while maintaining a separate category for local and regional reporting on the other. (<https://medium.com/the-walkley-magazine/journalism-is-changing-so-the-walkley-awards-are-too-3403590b85dd>)

Removing this category serves to further undermine this important area of journalism that is increasingly under threat from governments and non-government actors in many parts of the world who seek to reduce the presence of international journalists. The ongoing fighting in countries like Iraq and Syria shows how hard it is to source independent and reliable reporting about conflicts which affect us all in an increasingly globalised world. The reduction of scrutiny in these areas is of serious concern to international NGOs such as the International Committee of the Red Cross which has been trying to draw attention to this issue. The people who are prepared to work in hostile environments, despite the danger, should be honoured by us and their work should be acknowledged.

While today Australian media organisations may have fewer correspondents based in bureaux abroad, there is still a significant amount of journalism that is being generated by reporters travelling to stories that are under-reported or ignored. Having 'boots on the ground' remains the gold standard for reporting overseas as it garners eye-witness testimony to events and guarantees independent investigation. While local reporters also play a key part in getting information to global screens, they cannot do as effective a job as Australian reporters at framing it in a context that speaks to our specific understanding.

The international reporting category has brought us powerful reporting over the years, and has also taken out the Gold Walkley. The reporting of wars, conflicts, revolutions, and dramatic events, such as the 'Boxing Day Tsunami' (2004) are testimony to the importance of this category. Overseas, other organisations that uphold strong journalism continue to keep a separate prize for this

reporting. The Pulitzer Prize in the USA has categories in local reporting, national reporting *and* International reporting. The UK Press Awards retain the 'Foreign Reporter of the Year' award, sponsored by Reuters.

We urge you to reconsider this decision and to re-establish the category of 'International Journalism' to ensure peer recognition of this often dangerous and logistically difficult genre of reporting that is under threat from hostile governments, weakening news organisations and now its own media union.

Signed by the JERAA Executive on behalf of its members, in particular those (listed below) who have written to us over the past few days to express their disagreement with this decision:

Wendy Bacon/Journalist and Researcher
Catriona Bonfiglioli/UTS
Kathryn Bowd/University of Adelaide
Kayt Davies/Edith Cowan University
Lee Duffield/QUT
Caroline Fisher/Canberra University
Amy Forbes/James Cook University
Janet Fulton/Newcastle University
Johan Lidberg/Monash University
Fiona Martin/Sydney University
Bonita Mason/Curtin University
Colleen Murrell/Monash University
Chris Nash/Monash University
Roger Patching/Journalism Researcher
Jenna Price/UTS
Ian Richards/UNISA
Matthew Ricketson/Deakin University
David Robie/AUT
Angela Romano/QUT
Lynette Sheridan Burns/Western Sydney University
Jolyon Sykes/Journalism Researcher
Helen Vatsikopoulos/UTS
Alex Wake/RMIT
Lawrie Zion/La Trobe University