

The 2021 Ossie Award winners, showcasing Australia's best student journalism, were announced during an online awards session at the Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia conference.

Links to the stories and judges' comments are below, where publicly available.

The Australian Press Council Prize for Journalism Student of the Year (\$750 prize)

Winner – Reuben Spargo of Charles Sturt University.

Reuben Spargo demonstrated a winning blend of skill, professionalism, initiative and confidence across a distinct portfolio of podcasting, screen interviewing, and writing. The Charles Sturt University student's exceptional work highlighting [online trolling and abuse of prominent women](#) from politicians to journalists was one of several exemplary pieces.

Judges: Felicity-Ann Lewis of The Australian Press Council and Hedley Thomas, *The Australian*

Best text-based story by an undergraduate or postgraduate student – 750 words or less (\$200)

Winner – Danielle Mahe, Western Sydney University: [When I found out my HSC result, I felt like throwing up](#)

Danielle Mahe's op-ed piece on HSC results really stood out. It was timely, intimate and brave. The writing had the perfect tone for what the author was trying to achieve and spoke directly to the target audience. The ending was superb and it's easy to envisage the piece being a great comfort to many upset students and parents.

Judge: Bruce McKenzie, ABC

Best text-based story by an undergraduate student – over 750 words (\$200)

Winner – Max Aldred of University of Technology, Sydney: [*The trials of Charles Waterstreet*](#)

Max Aldred's interview with Charles Waterstreet represented was a difficult choice of subject, and one even experienced journalists would have struggled with. The judge was impressed by Aldred's ambition, and his willingness to press Waterstreet about the more unsavoury aspects of his recent history. The judge found it uncomfortable, revealing and highly readable journalism.

Judge – Myriam Robin, *Australian Financial Review*.

Highly commended –

- Kevin Ding, UNSW Sydney: [*Crisscross China \(in Sydney\) with eight distinctive regional noodle dishes*](#)
- Bradley Irvine-Thomas, University of South Australia: *MND: A Whispering Killer*

Best text-based story by a postgraduate student – over 750 words (\$200)

Winner – Hugh McClure of the University of Technology, Sydney: [*Priced out of the Canberra Property Bubble*](#)

Huge McClure's engaging multimedia package on the Canberra rental crisis was both ably reported and vividly told, in a delightful melding of old and new journalistic techniques.

Judge – Myriam Robin, *Australian Financial Review*.

Highly commended –

- Grace Stranger, University of Technology, Sydney: [Locked out: Prisoners with disabilities left behind in NDIS scheme](#)
- Hanne Grant, La Trobe University: [Performance Pressure: Arts and the yips](#)

Best audio story by an undergraduate or postgraduate student – 2 minutes or less (\$200)

Winner – Sasha Foot, University of Technology, Sydney: [Business FOGO use compromised in Sydney Council](#)

Sasha's story on food established a strong angle. The natural sound helped break up the voiceover. The use of more than one talent in the story was also a bonus.

Judge: Bruce McKenzie, ABC North Coast

Best audio story by an undergraduate or postgraduate student – over 2 minutes (\$200)

Winner – Zoe Stinson, of University of Melbourne: *Andrew*

From the very first second, the emotional impact of Zoe Stinson's podcast project *Andrew*, and Zoe's natural storytelling skill is clear. Her use of the medium of audio to tell the most intimate of stories - a journey to know the father she doesn't remember - is rigorous and brave. It was a clear winner as soon as I heard the first episode.

Highly commended – Emilia Roux, University of Technology, Sydney: [How safe are you in Australian bars?](#)

Judge: Ruby Jones, Schwartz Media

Best video story by an undergraduate or postgraduate student –2 minutes or less (\$200)

Winner – Amber Laidler, Macleay College: [Sydney scientists develop world-first drug to fight incurable children's cancer](#)

A thoughtfully written and presented package on a new cancer treatment. Grabs of the father who lost his son were very moving, giving the viewer an insight into the need to treat an illness few would have heard of. Having the story put together in a TV newsroom gives Amber an advantage over many other students, but she deserves credit for producing a very interesting and moving package.

Judge: Brett McLeod, Nine News

Highly commended –

- Aston Brown, University of Technology, Sydney: [Thousands of Sydney protesters defy lockdown](#)

Best video story by an undergraduate or postgraduate student – over 2 minutes (\$200)

Winner – Daniella Scotti, University of Technology, Sydney: [Next Gen Farmers](#)

Daniella clearly has personal reasons for wanting this story told – which can often be the springboard for some great coverage of untold stories. She gave a great insight into the stress and despair of the next generation of farmers, had a commendably diverse range of interviews, and excellent use of production techniques such as editing and music to further the story.

Judge: Brett McLeod, Nine

Highly commended –

- Reuben Spargo, Charles Sturt University: [Outback Youth](#)
- Lisa Edser, University of Technology, Sydney: [Escaping Afghanistan](#)

John Newfong Prize for reporting on Indigenous affairs (\$200)

Winner – Emelie Watkins, University of Sydney: [*What You Don't Hear*](#)

Emelie took a creative, compelling and nuanced approach to an important topic with this podcast. The judge loved the natural exchanges between the talent and the conversational VO is used sparingly to let the story flow. Emelie's excellent use of audio techniques helps convey what life sounds like for the hearing impaired. Indigenous perspectives have helped frame the storytelling – complete with original music from an Indigenous artist. A beautifully crafted story.

Judge – Ella Archibald-Binge, ABC

Highly commended –

- Amalyah Hart, University of Melbourne: [*The fight for the Martuwarra*](#)
- Charlee Harker, UNSW Sydney: [*Tokyo 2020: 'Embrace' of Indigenous athletes must be more than symbolic*](#)

Best innovation in journalism

Winner – Angus Thomson, Nell Gereats, Clancy Balen and team, University of Melbourne: *Uncurated: Unpacking Australia's Hidden Histories*

Clever, surprising and original pieces by all involved in this engaging podcast series. The idea to turn students' attention to their own institution brings the energy and fresh reckoning of recent social movements to museums and institutions of learning. This was a fresh, innovative take on history, race and the role our institutions play in telling all of our stories. Strong, original theme for series, piece uses the best possible storytelling methods for the medium (audio) mixing, production, scripting is near flawless and uses a clever, unfolding narrative to tease the listener into the programs.

Judge: Miguel D'Souza, Google News Initiative

Highly commended –

- Vivienne Crowle, UNSW Sydney: [*After penguin burrows, Fix it Sisters are ready for anything*](#)

- Students in the New Media: Harnessing Digital Disruptions subject, University of Melbourne: [Table Manners: From Farm to Plate](#)

Best publication (GBP100 book voucher, sponsored by Intellect Books)

Winner – UNSW Sydney: [Newsworthy](#)

Newsworthy doesn't try to replicate the stories of large news publishers. It's developing a unique brand of high-quality, issues-based reporting that captures the modern Australian zeitgeist and its place in the world. Newsworthy is refreshing, engaging and impressive.

Judge: Saffron Howden, Crinkling News

Best photojournalism by an undergraduate or postgraduate student

Winner – Sandra Sanders, University of Melbourne: *To the rescue: Melbourne's Kangaroos in Crisis & the Community Who Save Them*

Kangaroo Rescue shows good structure and a well thought out narrative, each picture brings fresh information to the story, the images were well composed, and the photographer has used light well to highlight aspects of the images and focus the viewers attention. The editing shows careful consideration in structuring the story to lead the viewers through the story, showing a good understanding of the principles of good visual story telling.

Judge: Chris McGrath, Getty Images

Highly commended –

- Yi Su, Monash University: [Cantonese Meet Sudden Pandemic Outbreak](#)

Best investigative journalism by an undergraduate or postgraduate student (\$200)

Winner – Charlie McLean, University of Technology, Sydney: [Australia's Vape Laws Just Got Even Tighter. The Black Market Isn't Worried](#)

This was well written and timely. The judge was impressed by Charlie's thorough research and ability to interview individuals directly involved in the industry. The writing was also very good, taking the reader on a journey which was both insightful and enjoyable.

Judge: Alison Sandy, Seven Network

Highly Commended –

- Youseff Saudie and Lydia Siamondo, RMIT University: [The grey areas for refugees settling into Australia](#)
- Petra Stock, Melbourne University: [Body of Work](#) investigating security of online learning for Victorian school students during the pandemic

Best investigative journalism by an undergraduate or postgraduate student (group)

Winner – Shamsiya Hussainpoor, Liam Webster-McAllister and Caspar McLeod, RMIT University: [How Australian footy can create a sense of belonging](#)

An insightful and interesting investigation into AFL and Australian migrants. It was well written and featured good case studies of real people and their integration and involvement in Australia's most popular sport.

Judge: Alison Sandy, Seven Network

Mindframe (individual, any medium, undergraduate) for reporting on a mental health or suicide related issue responsibly, accurately and sensitively (\$200 prize)

Winner – Talya Burgess, Griffith University: [*#chatsafe: Safe conversations on social media*](#)

Talya’s story balances the voices of researchers and young people involved in #chatsafe’s development, emphasising the guidelines’ role in empowering and supporting young people, rather than censoring them. Language used throughout the story reflects this ethos and is person-first and strengths focused. The story also includes information on support services and resources available to the community.

Judges: Dr Elizabeth Paton and Janine Johnston, Mindframe

Highly commended –

- Julia Back, Macleay College Melbourne: [*Taking the plunge for better mental health*](#)
- Samantha Gray, Griffith University: [*Reflections on the International Association for Suicide Prevention*](#)

Mindframe (individual, any medium, postgraduate) for reporting on a mental health or suicide related issue responsibly, accurately and sensitively (\$200 prize)

Winner – Olek Novak, University of Technology, Sydney: [*106 Days of Solitude: Life as a single person living alone during Sydney's 2021 lockdown*](#)

Olek’s multi-media piece reflects on his and others’ experiences during Sydney’s extended COVID lockdown. With a focus on creative growth as a coping mechanism for those in a ‘singles bubble’, *106 Days of Solitude* balances statistics and descriptions of

the challenges single people faced during lockdown with a strengths-based and positive viewpoint.

Judges: Dr Elizabeth Paton and Janine Johnston, Mindframe

Our Watch (individual, any medium, undergraduate) for a story which represents best-practice reporting of violence against women (\$200 prize)

Winner – Brea Lancaster, RMIT University: [*Growing up female: Sexual assault*](#) and [*What's the worst that could happen? Growing up in India*](#)

What made Brea Lancaster's work stand out was her unique style of interviewing in both podcasts. Her approach tackled difficult subject matter with the utmost of sensitivity and brought out interesting contributions from both guests. She looked at gender issues from a grassroots level and through an international lens. Brea's use of audio to explore exploitation and abuse against women was the clear winner in this category.

Judges: Aneka Simonis, Herald Sun and Drew Ambrose, Al Jazeera

Highly commended –

- Sarah Dane Sassin, University of Sydney: [*Message me when you get home*](#)
- Drishtee Lokee, LaTrobe University: [*Should catcalling be illegal in Australia?*](#)

Our Watch (individual, any medium, postgraduate) for a story which represents best-practice reporting of violence against women (\$200 prize)

Winner – Else Kennedy, University of Melbourne: Domestic violence series for *Guardian Australia*

Else Kennedy's domestic violence series highlighted the urgent need for better support for children of domestic homicide victims. She delved into the heartbreaking realities of this issue by interviewing a range of sources, including victims and clinical experts. She also gave powerful insight into how women on temporary visas were left more vulnerable than others during the pandemic.

Judges: Anneka Simonis, Herald Sun and Drew Ambrose, Al Jazeera

Highly commended –

- Ellie Mitsch, Swinburne University: [*One in two: every woman has a story*](#)

Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma – Asia Pacific for reporting on the impact of violence, crime, disaster and other traumatic events (\$200 prize)

Winner – Kaveh Akbari, UNSW Sydney: [*Counting the cost for every political 'particle of light'*](#)

The story was an enlightening angle on the breaking news from Afghanistan, and we particularly liked the way the journalist was able to interconnect one story (Afghanistan) with the traumatic memories of a different community (Iran), in a way that provided a new perspective of the experiences of all people who live through such dramatic shifts in political power.

Judge: Kimina Lyall of the Dart Centre for Journalism and Trauma – Asia Pacific.

Highly commended – Anthony Marsico, University of Melbourne: [*Beyond the rough and tumble: The hidden casualties of sibling violence*](#)

Monash Climate Change Communication Research Hub Prize (\$200)

Winner – Amalyah Hart, University of Melbourne: [*Seared into country and memory, lessons for a fiery future*](#)

Amalyah Hart’s article is a masterly piece of climate writing. The lyrical writing style blends seamlessly with accessible scientific explanations. She positions vivid exemplars of human and environmental impacts within the broader context of climate change. Just as the reader is nearly overwhelmed by the direness, she deftly transitions to hopeful paths forward—a valuable inclusion was the discussion of adopting Indigenous knowledge in land management.

Judge: John Cook, Monash Climate Change Communication Research Hub

Highly commended – Tayla Jacobsen, Macleay College: [*Zero Waste: the Circular Economy*](#)

The Australian Press Council Undergraduate Prize for an essay on the topic of media ethics (\$200 prize)

Winner: Samantha O'Connell, Monash University: Untitled essay on the ethics of privacy in the context of celebrity

Samantha discusses the challenges of celebrity and the issues throughout the essay with good use of references and examples. The challenges in arbitrating on who is a celebrity as there is no definition is a point well made as is the examination of the ethical dilemmas of ‘in the public interest’ and how this is delineated’ by journalists to keep celebrities safe from invasions of privacy which may ultimately affect their mental health.

Judge: Felicity-Ann Lewis, Australian Press Council

The Australian Press Council Postgraduate Prize for an essay on the topic of media ethics (\$200 prize)

Winner – Grace Stranger, University of Technology, Sydney: *The ethics of reporting on and working with Indigenous communities in Australia*

Grace's essay on the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody, and its recommendations about the media representations of Indigenous people, is a well-argued paper that makes strong points about the discrimination that results from a lack of understanding many media students have of indigenous people.

Judge: Felicity-Ann Lewis, Australian Press Council