

Walkley Review 2017 Background Paper

The Walkley Foundation is at the heart of the Australian media. And the Australian media continues to evolve. With the influx of new digital players, constant change in technology and roles within the industry, and a growing push for innovation and entrepreneurship -- it's never been more important to have awards that benchmark excellence and an industry body that supports the craft and those who love it.

As we prepare for a full review of the role the Walkley Foundation and Awards play in sustaining and strengthening excellence in Australian journalism, these objectives guide us:

- To better understand how the Australian media landscape looks today, and what that means for journalists: what are the new roles, workflows, tools, techniques and challenges?
- To ensure the awards reflect, and indeed lead, industry practice and how Australian journalists work today.
- To build better engagement in the awards, especially with new media players and commercial outlets.
- To provide the best possible Walkley programming & communications to develop, connect and inspire Australian journalists.
- To ensure the broad journalism community understands the work and value of the Walkley Foundation and the benefits available.
- To explore new opportunities for partnerships, funding and support available to the Foundation now that we have charitable status.
- To cement the Foundation as a thought leader, and enshrine innovation as a fundamental part of our mission, exploring how we can leverage our networks to encourage and support experimentation in journalism and new media ventures
- As journalism becomes globalised amid rapid industry change, to ensure the Australian media is plugged in at the centre of this movement.

Background

The Walkleys have been at the heart of Australian journalism, owned by the journalism community, since they were established in 1956. Originally a set of six awards, the Walkleys were jointly administered by the oil company Ampol, founded by Sir William Gaston Walkley, and the then-Australian Journalists Association. On his death in 1976, Walkley bequeathed both the naming rights and a small trust sum of money to the AJA to continue the awards.

The arrangements with Ampol continued into the 1990s (for the last two years in partnership with National Mutual). In 1993, the Media Alliance took over full administration and management of the Walkleys, building on the initial bequest with a wide ranging program of media and corporate sponsorship. As a result, the Walkley program expanded to include the regular magazine, a student program, conventions, conferences and training for journalists.

In 2013 the Walkley Foundation became a company limited by guarantee providing a transparent governance and financial structure. The Foundation is registered with Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit



Commission and can receive deductible donations. The Foundation is independently funded and receives support from media companies, corporate and community organisations and individual donors. The financial support of media companies is vital to the success of the Walkleys.

How past reviews have driven the evolution of the Walkleys:

1997: For the first time the awards were opened to all journalists and a user-pays system was introduced (with MEAA covering members' entry costs). The judging system was overhauled with the adoption of the Pulitzer two-tiered judging model. A three person national jury to recommend the three best entrants in a category, with the final award to be granted by a separate Walkley board was introduced. Introduction of the Walkley Advisory Board, a diverse group serving as both an independent advisory body on the awards and their public face.

2009: After consultation and submissions from the industry, Quentin Dempster and Paul Bailey, both former chairs of the Walkley Advisory board, introduced changes that further fine-tuned award categories and the judging processes and eligibility requirements. They aimed to recognise the changing way we make journalism – from long form (books, documentaries) to digital media.

2013: Laurie Oakes led the most recent review as the industry faced unprecedented upheaval. As news outlets and platforms converged and journalists explored the possibilities of online, multi-platform and digital storytelling. "What is a journalist" was a key question, with the review recommending that the Awards acknowledge and celebrate that journalism in "established and emerging media (which includes independent media publishers and bloggers). Entrants should state adherence to the MEAA Code of Ethics, declare corporate/commercial interests, with eligibility based on "independent acts of journalism". "Digital journalists and publishers are encouraged and supported to enter all categories.. In particular bloggers should be encouraged to enter the All Media category for Commentary."

The 2013 review comprised submissions, interviews and a survey of past judges and entrants. Some of the key changes as a result of this review were:

- To reflect the shift to online, Walkley Award categories were updated to focus more on core skills rather than medium/format (text, audio, video rather than newspaper, radio, television)
- Judges clearly briefed on criteria, conflict guidelines and weighing the resources available to entrants
- Fully digital entry process

Research strategy for 2016-17

Since 2013 we've seen media companies downsize and restructure, new digital players (startup and global brands) enter the Australian market, and storytelling change as the audience moves to mobile. The Walkleys have changed too: introducing programs to boost innovation and entrepreneurship, and explore the cutting edge of change through *Storyology*. The Foundation is also now a registered non-profit with charitable status.



This review will build on the findings of previous reviews, in both results and research methods. Fine-tuning the Walkley Awards to keep them at the vanguard of quality journalism will be key, but this is also our chance to ask bigger questions about how the Walkleys can lead/support the industry in a broader sense, and how that looks for the Foundation in terms of organisational mission, structure, funding, programming and communications. Again we'll use surveys, calls for submissions and interviews, plus incorporating more industry roundtable discussions and design thinking techniques, and we'll be asking questions like:

- How do we define journalism now? From books to Snapchat, what does great journalism look like in 2017 and beyond? What are the new roles, workflows, tools, techniques and challenges for journalists?
- How do we take what we do to a new audience of potential donors and supporters? How does the access to charitable funding help us take our work to new communities beyond our previous sponsorship model, and what does that mean for our programming and communications?
- The ecosystem of the industry has changed. What is the role for the Foundation in building networks and support to help Australian journalists and media organisations find funding to test bold ideas and start new ventures?
- How do we support and develop journalism leaders of the future - the energetic, diverse people with bright ideas who will steer the industry to a sustainable future?
- How do we build a sense of the value of quality journalism in the broader community?
- How do the awards and the award processes need to be adjusted to ensure they continue to benchmark excellence and encourage the best possible journalism in the 21st century?
- How do we define a “young journalist” and where and how are young journalists working? What are the particular challenges for young journalists, and what are their pathways to enter and develop in the industry today? How can we adjust the categories, judging and eligibility guidelines for the Walkley Young Australian Journalist of the Year Awards to best recognise emerging talent?
- It's been pointed out that the number of Walkley Award categories has grown while the number of working journalists shrinks. How can we recognise diverse work across a range of platforms and types of storytelling, with a leaner edit of categories that are still clear and hotly contested?
- As the world shifts to digital, how do we adapt and develop our communications to inspire and enrich our community and give them the information they need?
- What elements of our programming can we strengthen and improve to make sure we're leading discussions, training and networking that make Australian journalists better equipped for the future?
- What is the role for the Walkley Foundation in keeping Australian journalism connected to broader global networks and developments?

More than ever before, it's impossible to separate the business of sustaining journalism from the practice of the craft. The Walkleys cannot celebrate excellence without taking part in the conversation about how to sustain journalism itself.

We welcome your input, ideas and questions as we undertake this research and discussion. Walkley Advisory Board chair Kate McClymont will lead this review.



