

Four Corners investigation into Public Guardian wins 2022 Gold Walkley Award as ABC journalists earn 10 other awards

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The 2022 Walkley Awards were announced on Thursday night in Sydney. (Supplied: [Christian Gillies](#))

An ABC investigation has won the top honour at the 2022 Walkley Awards for Excellence in Journalism, with the organisation's journalists and broadcasters also taking home 10 other awards.

Anne Connolly, Ali Russell and Stephanie Zillman of ABC's Four Corners were awarded the Gold Walkley — as well as the award for Public Service Journalism — for their year-long investigation into Public Guardian and Trustee agencies.

[State Control exposed the stories of around 50,000 Australians who said they had been "virtually abducted by the state".](#)

"This was enlightening and determined reporting, giving power to voiceless people and allowing them to tell a story of complete powerlessness," the Walkley judges said.

"Prompting debate about law reform in various states, it has the potential to effect large-scale public policy reform."

A total of 26 ABC journalists were named finalists across 15 categories at the Awards, which were presented in Sydney on Thursday night.

ABC director of news Justin Stevens said the awards were "testament to the talent, hard work and incredible dedication of our people".

Key points:

- More than two dozen ABC journalists were nominated for a variety of Walkley awards
- Former Four Corners executive producer Sally Neighbour received an Outstanding Contribution to Journalism Award
- Photographer Brendan Esposito won Press Photographer of the Year for his work spanning Australia and Ukraine



"Our journalists and teams are passionate about bringing the best public interest journalism to Australians and it's wonderful to see their hard work recognised by their peers," he said.

The Walkley Foundation's chief executive, Shona Martyn, said Australian journalists had "excelled" in coverage of major events, "sometimes putting their lives on the line".

"This year's best journalism also includes stories that were uncovered by old-school legwork, tips, hard work, hunches and painstaking and considered investigation," she said.

"I congratulate all the winners and finalists for their recognition in the 67th Walkley Awards."

ABC's Brendan Esposito was named Press Photographer of the Year for work spanning Ukraine and Australia, and [former Four Corners Executive Producer Sally Neighbour](#) was honoured for Outstanding Contribution to Journalism.



Brendan Esposito's photo of NASA scientists investigating in the Northern Territory was among those submitted to the Walkley Foundation. (ABC News: Brendan Esposito)



Another, from a Four Corners investigation into gang violence, was also submitted. (*Four Corners: Brendan Esposito*)



Brendan Esposito's work also included covering Ukraine as Russia invaded and war unfolded. (*ABC News: Brendan Esposito*)

"In [Sally Neighbour's] seven years as Four Corners' executive producer, the program won 18 Walkleys, including two Gold Walkleys," the Walkley Foundation said in a statement.

"Four Corners stories she commissioned led to four royal commissions — into youth justice, banking, aged care and Murray Darling water theft."

Full list of ABC Walkley winners

2022 Gold Walkley Award

Anne Connolly, Ali Russell and Stephanie Zillman, ABC Four Corners, "State Control"

Nikon-Walkley Press Photographer of the Year

Brendan Esposito

Outstanding Contribution to Journalism

Sally Neighbour

Public Service Journalism

Anne Connolly, Stephanie Zillman and Ali Russell, ABC Four Corners, "State Control"

Innovation

Mark Doman, Michael Slezak and [Digital Story Innovations team, ABC](#), "Using 3D techniques to tell immersive stories (1, 2, 3)"

Coverage of Community & Regional Affairs

[ABC North Coast](#), "Northern Rivers flood catastrophe"

Sports Journalism

Lorna Knowles, Nikki Tugwell and Clare Blumer, ABC, "[Painful Past: the John Wright series](#)"

Radio/Audio News and Current Affairs

Sean Rubinsztein-Dunlop, ABC, "Ukraine war crimes"

Television/Video: Camera Work

Ryan Sheridan, ABC Four Corners, "Despair and Defiance" and "Feral"



Sally Neighbour was Four Corners' executive producer for almost a decade. (*Four Corners: Harriet Tatham*)

Television/Video Current Affairs Short (Less Than 20 Minutes)

Lorna Knowles and Nikki Tugwell, ABC 7.30, "[Painful Past: the John Wright series](#)" [1, 2, 3]

Television/Video Current Affairs Long (More Than 20 Minutes)

Adele Ferguson, Klaus Toft and Lauren Day, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, Four Corners, "[Cosmetic Cowboys: The unregulated world of cosmetic surgery](#)"