

Friday August 8, 2014

Seven News wins two Kennedy Awards

Seven News has been recognised for its outstanding news and public affairs coverage, winning two major categories in this year's Kennedy Awards for Excellence in NSW Journalism.

Seven News tonight earned the Harry Potter Award for Outstanding Television News Reporting for its series of reports into the Australian Defence Force's so-called 'Knights of the Jedi Council' sex ring and alleged cover-up.

An investigation that spanned weeks, *Seven News* crime reporter Robert Ovadia and investigative producer Paula Doneman combined their extensive networks of Defence and Police contacts to uncover evidence the ADF had tried to cover up in the Jedi investigation, initially clearing the soldiers then obstructing the police investigation.

Seven News was able to identify all 17 of the army personnel under immediate investigation – their ranks, jobs, nicknames and the allegations they were facing.

Editor, Duncan Farr and Graphic Artist, Tony Fox, brought the stories to life.

The same series of stories earned Robert and Paula the prestigious 2013 Walkley Award for TV News Reporting.

Robert said: "Paula and I are humbled by the trust placed in us by honest, reliable sources who risked their own livelihoods allowing us to uncover the truths others would prefer hidden. This is a tribute to their courage and fortitude.

"Our editor, Duncan Farr, and graphic artist, Tony Fox, did extraordinary work to get these complex exposés to air. Our thanks also go to our News Directors Rob Raschke, Chris Willis and Ross Dagan who backed us all the way and allowed Paula and I enough slack to keep digging for the truth."

Seven News senior cameraman Paul Walker took home the Gary Ticehurst Award for Outstanding News Camera Coverage for his series of reports on Syria's civil war and humanitarian crisis.

Paul travelled to Jordan with reporter Steve Pennells as Syria's civil war was emerging as the biggest humanitarian crisis since World War II. With next to no resources, the pair arrived in Amman and worked through a network of contacts as one led to another – the result was a powerful series of international scoops.

Paul and Steve were the first News crew to be given access to the military-controlled 'no-man's-land' along Jordan's dangerous Eastern border with Syria.

Paul, who shot and edited all the vision, said: "The stories were tough and dangerous. The challenge was to tell the stories and humanize the crisis in a way that resonated back home.

"With the support of Network Director of News Rob Raschke, we broke old practices of commercial television news to bring a humanitarian crisis from the other side of the world to a wider mainstream Australian audience. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reported a big spike in donations the week the stories aired."

Reporter Amy Phillips at affiliate station Prime7 Lismore was awarded the Paul Lockyer Award for Outstanding Regional Broadcasting for her coverage of the Bentley blockade.

SEVEN NEWS KENNEDY AWARD WINNERS:

HARRY POTTER AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING TELEVISION NEWS REPORTING

Seven News - Robert Ovidia, Paula Doneman, Duncan Farr and Tony Fox
"The Dark Side of the Force"

GARY TICEHURST AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING NEWS CAMERA COVERAGE

Seven News – Paul Walker
"Jordan"

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