Inaugural Media Diversity Australia Award at the Walkley Mid-Year Celebration awarded to ABC's 'You Can't Ask That' for tackling uncomfortable issues

The award honours journalists who are making an outstanding contribution through their reporting or coverage of diverse people or issues in Australia. This includes culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD) and people with disability (PWD).

It also recognises the significance of media coverage in providing nuanced reporting which serves to alter perceptions and attitudes, challenge stereotypes and fight misinformation.

The winning team includes Aaron Smith, Kirk Docker, Loni Cooper, Pauline Ernesto and Josh Schmidt, and they entered three episodes “You Can’t Ask That – Deaf, African Australians and Intersex”.

Five-time Walkley award-winning journalist, MDA board advisor and Head of Journalism at UTS, Monica Attard was one of the three judges.

"'You Can’t Ask That’ consistently challenges our perceptions of what it is to be 'different' even if different is being a member of a minority group. It is a brave and fearless program that tackles its subject matter with a light hearted touch that makes us think and hopefully, act", Attard said.

The newest award at the Walkley Mid-Year Celebration far exceeded all expectations with 72 entries. It’s a response that shows how needed this award is.

"Our not-for-profit exists because there is much to be done before Australian newsrooms reflect the diversity of our population, but while we drive change, it's important to recognise and applaud journalists who are doing an exceptional job when it comes to reporting on diverse communities."
As we know the media is an incredibly powerful opinion shaper, and at a time when the public is quite polarised, we have a responsibility to be fair, balanced and nuanced in our reporting of these communities,” MDA Director and co-founder Antoinette Lattouf said.

The Walkley Foundation administers the award, and it is funded by cohealth -- and the National Ethnic Multicultural Broadcaster's Council.

‘cohealth is committed to tackling race based discrimination, gender and economic inequality in partnership with people and the communities we live in because this improves health outcomes. This in turn contributes to a nation that acknowledges and celebrates the diversity of who we are as contemporary Australia,’ Chief Executive, Lyn Morgain said.

The 2019 finalists for the Media Diversity Australia Award were:

- **Sarah Dingle and the Background Briefing Team**, Radio National, ABC, “Australia On Trial”
- **Quentin McDermott, Natalie Whiting and Rebecca Latham**, Australian Story, ABC TV, “The Invisible Man”
- **Aaron Smith, Kirk Docker, Loni Cooper, Pauline Ernesto and Josh Schmidt**, ABC and ABC iview, “You Can’t Ask That – Deaf, African Australians and Intersex”

The award was presented at a cocktail event in Sydney on Wednesday night alongside other categories including Women’s Leadership in Media, Walkley Young Australian Journalist of the Year, Our Watch Award and Freelancer of the Year.

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**About Us:**
Media Diversity Australia is a nation wide not-for-profit organisation run by journalists and communications professionals. We are working to make our news media more reflective of all Australians.

- Provide support and networking opportunities for journalists and media professionals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Conduct empirical research about ethnic and cultural diversity in Australian media.
- Stimulate public discourse on issues related to cultural diversity including religion, gender, disability, income, age, geography and socio-economic backgrounds.
- Work in collaboration with media outlets on policies and strategies.
- Foster inclusive discussion that respects different viewpoints.
- Recognise the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander roles in the media.

National Ethnic Multicultural Broadcaster’s Council

The NEMBC is the national peak body representing the largest multicultural and multilingual media institution in Australia with over 600 member programs representing 4,000 broadcasters, producing over 2000 hours of programs a week in over 110 languages.

c Cohhealth

cohhealth is a not-for-profit community health organisation that strives to improve health and wellbeing for all and lead the way in reducing health inequity in partnership with people and the communities in which they live.

We have developed a unique model that provides a financially sustainable and impactful way to address social and environmental challenges and make a real difference.