

Vital journalism celebrated at 2020 Quill Awards

Journalism in more than 30 categories was recognised for excellence at the 2020 Quill Awards dinner on Friday March 26, with the work showcased on the night demonstrating more than ever how much Victorian media mattered in the past year.

The pandemic which stopped the world in its tracks was reflected in winning entries across categories, from [Matt Golding's cartoon](#) about hoarding and [The Age online's multi-platform cutting-edge coverage](#) to 60 Minutes and A Current Affair reports (both by Christine Ahern) that exposed [the bungled hotel quarantine scheme](#) and failures in a [Melbourne aged care home](#) which enabled infections to run out of control in the community. The Age's Rachael Dexter and Justin McManus won the [Innovation in Journalism Quill](#) for documenting lives in lockdown while the tragic implications of the crisis were distilled in the winning [Features Photograph](#), by Chris Hopkins, of reunited sisters, one terminally ill, farewelling each other through a window.

But Coronavirus was by no means the only story. In a year in which the Black Lives Matter movement swept across the Western world, the issue of systemic racism was drawn into sharp focus locally and was reflected in separate winning entries at the Quills addressing entrenched disadvantage and discrimination experienced by Indigenous footballers. An [Australian Story report](#) on the trials of Richmond's Marlion Pickett won the inaugural Quill for Recognising Excellence in Indigenous Affairs Reporting, while reportage on the devastating racism suffered by 1970s St Kilda player Robert Muir won ABC reporter Russell Jackson both [the Quill for Sports Feature](#) and the [Gold Quill for best overall category winner](#). The Gold Quill judges' choice was a popular one, with Jackson receiving a standing ovation on the night following an emotional speech about his relationship with Muir, who he had met in person for the first time at the event.

The issue of racism was alive also in the multimedia report 'We Feed You' which won [the Victorian Government Quill for Reporting on Multicultural Affairs](#). The "highly creative" illustrated piece, produced by André Dao, Michael Green and Tia Kass for The Saturday Paper, presented the voices, struggles and strengths of temporary migrants working at the margins of the food chain in Australia.

Another huge story in 2020 was alleged war crimes committed by Australian soldiers in Afghanistan, the unflinching pursuit of which saw investigative reporter (and Melbourne Press Club President) Nick McKenzie take home the [Feature Writing Quill](#) as well as the [Grant Hattam Quill for Investigative Journalism](#) (shared with Chris Masters), and contributed to the portfolio which won McKenzie the [Graham Perkin Australian Journalist of the Year award](#).

ABC Four Corners weighed in on another disturbing home-grown social problem in 2020 when the team's exposé 'Boys Club' revealed casual misogyny and the predatory grooming of minors in a private Melbourne boys' school. The program, which won the [Quill for](#)

[Longform TV/ Video Feature](#), sparked changes in the school's attitudes and governance. Another high-impact Four Corners investigation led by reporter Louise Milligan, 'Inside the Canberra Bubble', kicked off a high-level conversation about sexist culture inside Parliament House, and was highly commended in the [Grant Hattam investigative category](#).

For regional Victoria, the issue of homelessness was highlighted when a one-off award initiated by the Father Bob Maguire Foundation, [the Cobberwealth Award for Reporting on Social Inclusion](#), was won by Shepparton News reporter Charmayne Allison for a podcast and series of articles that detailed the causes and consequences of the problem.

Other regional and rural inequities were brought under the spotlight by winners of the [Quill for Regional and Rural Journalism](#) Charlotte King and Andy Burns, whose joint ABC Regional and Background Briefing investigation revealed a higher incidence of stillbirths in country areas due to shortcomings in regional maternity care. Their reporting contributed to the establishment of a national stillbirth audit program to improve the collection of data on preventable deaths.

An in-depth report on the practice of 'bee broking' saw Jess Malcolm from Melbourne University named Student Journalist of the Year. Her long-form story on this little-known form of "livestock" management also explored the implications of the rapid expansion of almond plantations, which the bees are moved around to pollinate.

Other work celebrated at the Quills held governments and their agencies to account on a wide range of issues. Paul Sakkal from the Age was named the Young Journalist of the Year for a portfolio which included important stories on the failings of hotel quarantine and alleged Liberal Party branch stacking. The Guardian Australia's Luke Henriques-Gomes took home the [News Report in Writing Quill](#) for his dogged reporting on the scope and impact of the Federal Government's failed Robodebt scheme.

Contributing positively to a general understanding of disability was Chris Gillett's 7.30 report 'Olivia's Story', which was the winner of [The Victorian Government Quill for Reporting Disability Issues](#). The piece gave viewers a glimpse of the struggles and overwhelming love of a couple whose daughter has been diagnosed with a rare genetic disorder. The judges said it captured a rare depth of emotion and "enlightened rather than lectured to" its audience.

Recognised for excellence stretching back over five decades was former Sun News-Pictorial editor Colin Duck, who was awarded the [2020 Melbourne Press Club Lifetime Achievement Award](#) for an extraordinary career in journalism, editing and publishing.

The [Graham Perkin Australian Journalist of the Year](#) and [Harry Gordon Australian Sports Journalist of the Year](#) winners were also announced on the night. For details on the national awards and on all the Quills, visit melbournepressclub.com.

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