

A photograph of Michael Gordon, a man with white hair and glasses, wearing a blue shirt and a grey jacket, standing in a field of tall grass and shrubs. In the background is the large, red rock formation of Uluru under a cloudy sky.

# **Big heart** *Elegant pen*

A saltwater smile  
Wise with words  
Wild in the water  
Warm in the world

**Michael Gordon**

14 August 1955 – 3 February 2018

## Awards

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- 1991** *The Sunday Age* Journalist of the year.
- 1998** Graham Perkin Australian Journalist of the Year, highly commended for a body of work.
- 1999** United Nations Association Media Peace Prize, print category.
- 2000** United Nations Association Media Peace Prizes, print and promotion of reconciliation categories, for a series of articles described by judges as “the closest thing to a masterpiece”.
- 2001** Queensland Premier’s Literary Award, literary or media work promoting public debate category, for *Reconciliation: A Journey* (UNSW Press).
- 2002** United Nations Association Media Peace Prize, promotion of reconciliation category.
- 2003** Walkley Award, all media category, coverage of Indigenous Affairs.
- 2006** Melbourne Press Club Quill Awards, best feature in print.
- 2006** Graham Perkin Australian Journalist of the Year, for a series of reports on asylum seekers being held on Nauru.
- 2007** United Nations Association Media Peace Prize, promotion of reconciliation category (shared).
- 2007** Melbourne Press Club Quill Awards, best columnist.
- 2011** Walkley Book Award, finalist, for *Bells: The Beach, The Surfers, The Contest* (Woolamai Publishing).
- 2011** United Nations Association Media Peace Prize, best print feature.
- 2017** Walkley Award, most outstanding contribution to journalism.

## Books

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- A Question of Leadership: Paul Keating Political Fighter* (UQP) 1993; updated as *Paul Keating: A Question of Leadership* (UQP) 1993; updated as *Paul Keating: True Believer* (UQP), 1996
- Reconciliation: A Journey* (UNSW Press) 2001.
- Freeing Ali: The Human Face of the Pacific Solution* (UNSW Press) 2005.
- Layne Beachley: Beneath the Waves*, with Layne Beachley (Random House) 2008, second edition 2009.
- One For All: The Story of the Hawthorn Football Club*, with Harry Gordon (Wilkinson Publishing) 2009.
- Bells: The Beach, The Surfers, The Contest* (Woolamai Publishing) 2011.
- Playing To Win: Inside Hawthorn’s Journey to an 11th Premiership* (Slattery Media Group) 2014.

# TRIBUTES

ORDERED ALPHABETICALLY

## Bruce Guthrie

THE NEW DAILY

### The impeccable Michael Gordon: A journalist's journalist remembered

**I**N 1973, IN THE FIRST WEEKS OF HIS cadetship at *The Age*, Michael Gordon was sitting in a journalism class at Melbourne's RMIT when the lecturer decided to read out one of his A+ assignments.

He probably shifted uncomfortably in his seat at the prospect. Humble throughout what would become a stellar 45-year career, Michael was shy to the point of awkwardness back then.

Sitting a couple of rows behind the then 17-year-old that day, I could only marvel at the maturity of his work. Astonishingly, I can still recall some of the phrases he used in the piece.

I wasn't the only student in that class that day who realised they'd have to up their game if they were going to make it in the profession. It would not be the last time Michael would inspire me or an audience with his work.

Michael, who we lost on Saturday in the waters off Phillip Island at just 62, was a natural from the get-go. This probably had more than a little to do with being the son of legendary Melbourne journalist and editor, Harry Gordon.

They shared a unique personal and professional bond built on a love of

words and the search for truth. Michael read the first and last paragraphs of his key pieces to his father pretty much up to the day Harry died just three years ago.

Michael was a determined fact-checker, something that comes through in the scores of tributes that have flowed since his death, particularly from the many politicians he reported on in Canberra and beyond.

He would almost always ring his sources back and check that he had it right before sending his copy. He'd check tone too. Was the story pitched correctly?

It was no surprise that key players on all sides of politics talked to him willingly. His sources were impeccable because he treated them impeccably.

It explained why, less than a decade into his career, Michael was the leading industrial relations journalist in the country at a time when Bob Hawke was on the rise and the union movement was at its peak.

As an industrial reporter myself, I witnessed his excellence at close quarters because in those days we shared the same digs at Carlton's Trades Hall. Michael bested us most days but was

incredibly generous on the rare occasions *The Herald* and *The Sun* reporters turned the tables on him.

In 1987 we finally got to work together when Michael agreed to become the US correspondent for *The Herald* in Melbourne. (Now defunct, its name lives on today as one half of the *Herald Sun* masthead.)

It was an enormous decision for him because it meant leaving *The Age* where he'd further enhanced his reputation with a move to Canberra.

He proved to be a brilliant foreign correspondent, understanding that the best of them write for the entire paper, not just page one.

Michael would routinely file stories that led all sections – news, business, features, sport, entertainment. He did it with ease and grace, even though he and his wife Robyn – a book publishing executive who Michael worshipped – became first-time parents soon after his posting to New York.

(A music lover, Michael also discovered singer-songwriter Tracy Chapman in a bar, long before the record companies did. But that's another story.)

He got the chance to return to Melbourne and *The Age* when it launched a Sunday edition in 1989. Again, happily, we found ourselves working together, he in Canberra as the paper's first political correspondent, me in Melbourne as deputy editor.

Michael earned his entire first month's salary with a single master stroke: he somehow convinced then prime minister Bob Hawke and his deputy Paul Keating to pose together for our launch issue, despite the enmity between them. The resultant page one was museum quality.

He was a terrific political correspondent and led the paper most weekends with agenda-setting news breaks. His political analysis was first-rate too.

When I became editor of *The Sunday Age* in 1992 my first move was to make Michael the paper's deputy editor.

He brought tremendous rigour to the role, demanding the best of our journalists and curbing the worst instincts of the editor.

And it was that integrity that defined Michael. Not only in journalism, but all his personal and professional relationships. He was incapable of deceit. And he adhered to the highest of principles, no matter what.

Former *Sunday Age* sports editor, Geoff Slattery, summed it up best when he said of Michael: "The link was integrity and honesty and, in journalism, that rare capacity to never let personal views get in the way of the facts; even in his campaigns for indigenous rights and the rights of asylum seekers, his personal view was only to ensure the story was continued, and then let the story tell itself."

In 1994 *The Australian's* Paul Kelly lured Michael away from executive life, back to Canberra. I understood the decision, even if hurt me – and *The Sunday Age* – to lose him.

His departure ended a seven-year run of working together rather than at rival organisations. We never did again. It's a time I'll treasure even more now.

Michael would go on to earn his place at the very highest levels of Australian journalism, winning plaudits and honours along the way. He deserved every single one of them.

When he retired just eight months ago, we dined with our wives at a mod-

est restaurant in the Melbourne suburb where we both lived. We reflected on lives and careers that had been kind to us and looked to the future.

Michael and Robyn had become grandparents for the first time almost a year ago, after their daughter Sarah had presented them with a grandson, named after Harry. Their son Scott is an aid worker in Africa.

Michael was a man in full that night, looking forward to more surfing, more travel and, God forbid, more Hawthorn premierships.

Late in the night, he admitted to some nervousness at what lay ahead given the state of our industry: Journalism was struggling and newspapers were in undoubted decline.

We consoled ourselves by acknowledging that the Class of '73 had been more fortunate than most. The golden age of newspapers had allowed us to catch waves that carried us all the way to the beach. As a surfer, he liked that image. But as good as the ride was, his wave still closed out too soon.

## Fergus Hunter

### FACEBOOK

THE LAWN IS PICTURE PERFECT at my parents' house right now. That's because Micky mowed it on Tuesday. And now he's gone.

A man who devoted himself to being good and doing good was taken yesterday in a most unjust way.

Unjust for him, a man in better shape than most people half his age and nowhere near finished with life. It's unjust for Robyn, Sarah, Scott, little Harry and the other family and friends who were everything to him. And it's unjust for the world, which desperately needs more Michael Gordons, not fewer.

Decency coursed through Micky's veins. It twinkled in his eyes and radiated from his easy smile. It imbued every word he uttered or bashed out on a keyboard with those index fingers. When he gave you a famous Gordon hug, decency enveloped you.

There was also generosity, wisdom, compassion, integrity, versatility, sensitivity, passion, humility, honesty, respect, conviction, optimism, sincerity, warmth. A lot of people have used these words about him and they are all 100% true. People don't come better than Michael Gordon. That he was such a significant part of so many lives says it all. Seeing all the friends saying Micky spoke to them on an almost daily basis underlines that he lived for those around him.

Thanks to his 40-year friendship with my father, Micky has been around my entire life. Unsurprisingly, every memory is warm and fuzzy. Noisy yum cha the day after a grand final; helping him with his ridiculous IT issues; planting trees down at "the block"; kicking the footy in Hawthorn; feeling very comfortable with my decision to sleep in when he and Scotty were heading off in the dark

for a morning surf. I remember noticing a long time ago that, for some reason, I had inadvertently adopted some of his mannerisms – mainly this kind of precise slicing action when making a point. I'm not sure if I still do it. In recent years, there was the honour and joy of working with him. It was poetry to add that texture to our relationship. I will always cherish the bylines we got together.

What a wonderfully talented and well-rounded journalist he was. His authoritative and influential body of work – books and stories spanning politics, refugees, reconciliation, surfing, football and more – is unmatched and will remain that way.

I saw that Imran Mohammed, a young Rohingya refugee who has taught himself English on Manus, posted something last night about how much he appreciated Micky:

"This afternoon I was reading messages I have received from Michael over time and they brought me to tears. Some of his words to me 'Thank you Imran. It was very special to spend some time with you. I look forward to hearing about all the good things you do once this is over.' I burst into tears as I knew he would not be

there to see my achievements and share the happy moments in life once I am free and live in peace."

That paragraph just about finishes me off.

At Harry's funeral in 2015, Les Carlyon said the great man "could scold in print without being mean". Just one of the many qualities he shared with his son. It's spooky to revisit Micky's own eulogy for his father – throughout much of it, he could be describing himself. Except he wouldn't talk about his own qualities like that, of course, because of the intense, utterly genuine humility.

At Micky's farewell dinner when he left Fairfax after so many years, I bawled my eyes out. It was devastating to lose him as a colleague. Turns out that was just the practice round. It remains unfathomable to lose him completely.

I can picture him right now, Ray Bans on, hands on hips, beaming as he talked about life. "Fergo," he'd say when he picked up the phone. I cannot believe we'll never talk again. I cannot imagine the world without him.

My heart aches for Robyn, Sarah, Scott, Harry, the rest of his family and his dearest friends.

Goodbye, beautiful man.

## Mark Kenny

### THE AGE

Fair, thorough and thoroughly decent, Michael Gordon's trick was no trick at all

DRIVING THROUGH THE RURAL town of Cowes on Saturday morning, Russell Broadbent spotted the

beaming smile of Michael Gordon among competitors limbering up for the annual Phillip Island Penguin Swim Classic.



Gordon was “in his element”, raring to go. Broadbent had things to do but knew he would be home in time for Gordon’s post-race visit. “He always came by afterwards.”

Except this time, he didn’t. The 62-year-old never made it back off the beach, suffering a fatal heart attack as he neared the end of the swim.

It was the last time Broadbent, a federal Liberal MP, saw his close friend, a man he revered as a deep thinker, and lodestar of federal political reporting.

Australia’s media and political communities are reeling too from “Micky’s” sudden death.

It is a mark of the man that so many not only admired him professionally, but also loved him for his generosity, unshakeable civility, and the finer qualities he discerned in them.

In the 24 hours since the news broke, past and present prime ministers, Indigenous leaders, refugee advocates, premiers, sports stars – the Hawthorn Football Club was virtually a part of him – and of course journalists, have rushed to express their grief, their sadness, their inexplicable loss.

Gordon’s trick was no trick at all. It was simply in his nature to be fair and thorough. While he could dissect power and expose its harshness, he was never sensational, nor personal or vindictive. In the shouty belligerent age, this was a rarity. It meant that friends loved him, and even those who’d been the subject of his criticism accepted the good faith of his judgments.

As Paul Keating observed, Gordon didn’t state the obvious nor hype things up, and always treated readers as intelligent beings, capable of drawing their own conclusions.

“There was no condemnation in Michael Gordon,” agreed Broadbent, who lunched with the Melbourne-based journalist at least once a month and always got in a dinner or two during fortnights in Canberra when Parliament was sitting.

“I loved him, and I think he loved me, but then, I know Michael made many people feel that way,” Broadbent said.

Gordon’s approach could have a profound impact upon the powerful, and on those without any power at all like Mustafa Najib, a refugee from the 2001 Tampa crisis who was interviewed by Gordon in 2011.

“He invited me and my younger brother to his house. My brother was interested in media and I told Michael, so he took us for a tour of *The Age* offices – that was the sort of love and support and humanity that he always showed,” Mr Najib said.

Across a profession known for its egos and rivalries, recognised names offered accounts of something else: undiluted respect.

“Micky was driven by an enduring sense of social justice, which went back to his childhood when he met some of the cast of *Jedda*,” said long-time friend and now Sky News contributor, Jim Middleton.

“On a personal level, my daughter Ronni reminded me of his behaviour on beach holidays. He would spend hours teaching all the kids, not just his own, how to surf, how to relish the ocean, just as he did. He was, said Ronni, simply family.

“He was a child of the sea and there is a small measure of consolation in the fact that he died doing what he loved.”

Insiders host Barrie Cassidy also knew Gordon for decades. “He went away

too soon but what a remarkable legacy he leaves behind, as did his wonderful father before him – both of them great journalists and good and decent people,” Cassidy said.

*Australian Financial Review* political editor Laura Tingle said Gordon stayed with stories because of their importance to real people. “Indigenous affairs and refugees are not just highly emotive issues, but bloody difficult to cover. All the politics is difficult. Not playing to prejudice is hard. And not many people are covering them any more. Michael was the exemplar of excellence in reporting through his commitment to keeping the spotlight on these issues, when we would rather look away,” she said.

It was a view echoed by Indigenous leaders like Marcia Langton, who often discussed events with Gordon over coffee.

“Throughout all that time he was the journalist I trusted the most to get the story right,” she said.

Then there was this account expressed on Facebook by Rohingya refugee Imran Mohammad, who met Gordon during a 2017 trip to Manus Island.

“It shattered my heart when I heard the news of his death this afternoon,” the young refugee wrote.

“I was reading messages I have received from Michael over time and they brought me to tears. Some of his words to me: ‘Thank you Imran. It was very special to spend some time with you. I look forward to hearing about all the good things you do once this is over.’ I burst into tears as I knew he would not be there to see my achievements and share the happy moments in life once I am free and live in peace.”

Former Hawthorn player and coach

David Parkin also paid tribute to his friend, noting Gordon’s interviews for his updated history of the Hawks had helped him accept his sacking as Hawthorn coach in 1980 had been good for the club.

Gordon hadn’t flinched from the truth. “He saw it as it was, it was the right thing for the club to do at the time,” Parkin said.

Parkin said he couldn’t get upset at Gordon and they even laughed together. “He’d have it so well balanced and well presented, you could accept it.”

Julia Gillard described Gordon as “a thoroughly decent man whose approach to journalism was to thoughtfully tell the truth”.

Across the aisle, figures like Jeff Kennett expressed grief, and Malcolm Turnbull marked “one of the great gentlemen of the world of journalism”.

“Gentle, wise, always calm, such a great man, such a great writer and mentor. And to die swimming – he died doing what he loved ... but so young. Far too soon,” Mr Turnbull said.

Former Victorian premier Ted Baillieu, who swum most weeks with Gordon at the Hawthorn pool, spoke of his admiration for his friend and their shared passion for ocean swimming.

“He was wise with words, wild in the pool and warm with the world,” Mr Baillieu said.

A personal point. Many years ago, I invited Micky to come on an ABC radio footy panel to talk about one of his great passions, the AFL. He politely declined, saying broadcasting wasn’t his thing. A journalist not into self-promotion? That was Michael Gordon right there. A man for whom it was always the story, never the writer.

None will be more missed.

## Chip Le Grand

THE AUSTRALIAN

Michael Gordon, political journalist admired by all

LAST NOVEMBER, JOURNALIST Michael Gordon took his surf board to a Queensland beach near where his father Harry had lived out his final days and paddled with family members beyond the break. There, in the gentle swell of the deep blue, he scattered his dad's ashes.

No one could have imagined that Gordon, an admired and respected political journalist for *The Age*, *The Australian* and Melbourne's *The Herald* newspapers, would follow his father so soon. He died on Saturday in the waters off Phillip Island, competing in an ocean swim.

The last two articles Gordon wrote were interview pieces with former prime ministers from opposite sides of Australia's political divide. The subjects of those interviews, John Howard and Julia Gillard, were among those who paid tribute to Gordon on the day of his unexpected death.

The twin stories, published to promote the McKinnon Prize for political leadership, are a fitting epilogue to what Paul Keating described as the mountain of work that Gordon left behind.

Rarely has a journalist navigated the nation's treacherous political currents, over so long a career, while making so few enemies. He is remembered less for the big stories he broke than the integrity, consideration and humanity that shaped his work and personal life.

Gillard described Gordon as a thoroughly decent man. "His approach to journalism was to thoughtfully tell the truth," she said. Tony Abbott remembered him as one of Australia's finest political journalists. Malcolm Turnbull said Gordon was wise and calm. Bill Shorten said his "every word was yielded with cause."

Gordon, a fit, non-smoking, experienced ocean swimmer who died at the age of 62, was indeed a journalist with a cause. He spent much of the latter stage of his career writing about refugees and subjecting to scrutiny Australia's off-shore processing and detention of asylum seekers.

His indefatigable reporting led to him being named 2005 Australian Journalist of the Year by the Melbourne Press Club. Last year, after Gordon retired from *The Age* newspaper where he worked for 37 of his 44 years in journalism, the Walkley Foundation honoured him with a lifetime achievement award. The citation read in part:

"The overwhelming impression Gordon left – with both his byline and his presence – was of decency, integrity, fairness and balance. Even when he was working at the epicentre of influence, he held himself outside the media pack."

Cartoonist Peter Nicholson worked with Gordon at *The Age* and later at *The Australian*, when Gordon was national political editor. He said Gordon always

found time to discuss an idea—even in the bedlam before deadline—and was forever looking to improve his writing.

"There was no ostensible agenda; he would approach everything from a humanitarian viewpoint," Nicholson said. "I don't think he made an enemy anywhere. It is pretty cut-throat in Canberra and he was a good friend to have, always."

Amid tributes from former prime ministers, political figures and prominent journalists, Gordon was acknowledged by Aboriginal leaders, former refugees, Australia's Tamil community and migrant families who he befriended, helped and spoke for.

Beyond politics, Gordon was a passionate surfer, dedicated swimmer and much-loved father who recently became a grandfather to baby Harry, named after

the celebrated foreign correspondent, Olympic writer and historian and editor of the Melbourne newspaper, *The Sun*.

He wrote books about Paul Keating, Bells Beach and the Hawthorn Football Club. He was immensely proud of the humanitarian work done by his son Scott in one of the world's poorest countries, Sierra Leone.

Most mornings, Gordon could be found at a pool in Hawthorn, swimming laps with former Victorian premier Ted Baillieu and other members of the "Lane 4 Club."

Baillieu was due to meet Gordon for lunch this week. "He is just a fantastic bloke and a beautiful, beautiful writer," he told Media. "He loved to surf and open water swimming. He was a guy with a salt water smile; wise with words, wild in the water, warm in the world."

## Warwick McFadyen

THE DAILY REVIEW

A tribute to Michael Gordon

THERE'S NO LEAST LIKELY. DEATH comes for all. But what the brain knows the heart cannot believe. Sometimes a life is taken out of your universe and all you can do is to wail, No it cannot be, It's not fair. You stand at ground zero from the blast of the news, the earth annihilated from the shockwaves, stunned, bereft. Here I am. I know others are here as well.

Goodbye Michael Gordon, friend and former colleague. Michael died at the beach on Saturday. He was too, too young to go. Some live with death is on their

shoulder, but for others it seems on the horizon too far away to see, until it comes on a clear morning, sun shining, warmth in the air, a blue sky above. It strikes and then it departs, leaving carnage in its wake. No one saw it coming this morning. It was the least likely act to take the stage. And yet it did.

No more the sound of his voice, only lamentation and memories of a good man and fine journalist, one of the best in the industry, winner of many awards including only last year the Walkley for outstanding contribution to journalism.

When I sent congratulations to him on it, he said he was overwhelmed. The regard and love with which he was held can be seen in the breadth and multitude of responses to his passing, from prime ministers to asylum seekers to Indigenous communities to surfers to footballers to former colleagues.

The sudden, unexpected taking is death's cruelty of indifference. There is no time to prepare for last goodbyes, no final words or touch. It is brutal. That one so alive is now a ghost is to rend the heart. To keep saying there should have been more time is a torture. But we keep saying it, because if there was any justice in the cosmos, Michael would have had more time. He would be surfing today. He would be with his family. He would be writing. He would be among us.

But there was no time to "rage against the dying of the light" as Dylan Thomas would have us do, no time to ride, as

Emily Dickinson, wrote: "Because I could not stop for Death, / He kindly stopped for me; / The carriage held but just ourselves / And Immortality. / We slowly drove, he knew no haste, / And I had put away / My labor, and my leisure too, / For his civility."

Thomas also wrote that death shall have no dominion. But it does. I'm within the shadows of its walls now. In time I will step out of them, but in doing so my heart tells me I will carry a part of that shadow with me, always. And I will carry the memory of a friend and colleague, one who signed his book *Bells*, "To Warwick soul surfer and friend, Michael."

His voice is gone but it is not silent. It resides in everyone his life touched. Still now, I can imagine him riding the last wave in before the swell turns onshore. I can see him punching the keyboard to make deadline. That's what the heart does. When death punctures the least likely, it holds onto the memories. Vale.

## Nick McKenzie

### THE AGE

#### 'Go, Micky, go': What Michael Gordon taught Nick McKenzie about journalism... and life

WE BELLOWED WAR CRIES OF encouragement as the swell rolled into Woolamai, hitting the sandbank and rearing up into a powerful left.

"Go, Nicky, go!" Michael Gordon would yell, urging me to turn fear into energy and paddle like mad.

Then it was Micky's turn.

"Go, Micky, go!" I would hoot as his thick, yellow board skimmed by and,

with his face zinc smeared and shaded by his sun cap (he was surely the daggiest bloke in the water), Michael would rise up and begin gliding – no, he was flying – over the water, his face a study in calm concentration. A man possessed by the waves.

He had that same expression on his face when he sat at his computer, especially on early Friday afternoon as the deadline for his Saturday column

loomed. There, he was a man possessed by words, by his craft and by a desire to make a difference.

I spent years eavesdropping on Michael. He had two phone conversations at his desk over and over again. One was with the asylum seekers and refugees stranded on Manus and Nauru. Their groundhog day became Michael's. He patiently recorded their helplessness and indignity and by telling their stories over and over again, he helped many find dignity and agency while exposing the immense human cost of a bipartisan policy.

Michael did this for years, quietly convincing bored editors that the story deserved a run while avoiding what would have been a far easier path in chasing the sexier political yarn of the week. He travelled to the offshore camps, having been the first reporter to visit Nauru in 2005. When journalists were blocked from visiting, he used Skype, letters and scratchy phone lines to communicate. "And what is your message to the Australian public," I heard him calmly ask, time and time again, as the man on the other end cried or pleaded and implored.

The other phone conversation Michael had every week involved him reading his national affairs column to a mysterious mentor to ensure he hadn't missed a beat, or strayed into partisan territory.

I once asked Michael who he spoke to, but he just smiled wryly. I guessed it was his great mate and inspiration, his father and former newspaper editor Harry, but the calls continued after Harry died in 2015. It was obvious Michael wasn't getting a steer, or pleasing a source or ceding

editorial control. Rather, he was being endlessly thorough and fair, guessing and second-guessing his work, refining and rewriting.

Journalism gave a lot to Michael, but it took a lot as well. The relentless anxiety to be scrupulously thorough and endlessly productive increased over the course of each week as the Friday deadline loomed. But it was the fact that he bled for his craft, and for the voiceless and dispossessed, that made his work matter.

Michael was also among the nation's finest political observers, alongside Laura Tingle, Laurie Oakes, Paul Kelly and Michelle Grattan.

"The book he wrote about Keating was one of the things that inspired me to go into politics," federal MP Anthony Byrne told me on Saturday. No small praise.

But Michael was a different sort of columnist. What he lacked in the acerbic insight of Tingle, he made up for in quiet decency, forensic analysis and elegant writing. His shyness and humanity, coupled with a fierce intellect and quiet courage, endeared him to his subjects. He went bike riding with Tony Abbott and the pair talked about Michael's other great passion, Indigenous reconciliation. He interviewed and wrote about Paul Keating in a way that even Keating thought fair and substantial. But Michael never pulled his punches when it mattered. During the last federal election, a scoop he wrote about Malcolm Turnbull led to Michael being denied a set piece interview with the prime minister. "He's done himself no favours with the PM," a friend of mine in Turnbull's office told me when I urged a rethink.

Michael shrugged. That was his job.

Such was his nature, Michael would have been blown away by the outpouring of grief and respect for him on Saturday, including from many young reporters he patiently mentored, handed news tips and the numbers of hard won contacts. Beyond the senseless tragedy of a life ended too short, this wave of emotion also goes to the role Michael played as a steady moral beacon in a media and political industry increasingly swamped by partisan shrillness and social media noise.

Many people also remembered Michael's trademark hugs, which this sometimes shy and self-conscious man used to tell people they were part of his family. After a few hugs, you got to know its actual members, Robby (Michael's wife, Robyn), Sarah and Scotty (kids), and a surfing crew that began decades ago

with his old high school and uni mates and grew to include their children and other assorted ring-ins. This big family extended to a few famous political, business and sporting types, but also many in the refugee and Indigenous sectors.

Three weeks ago, I sat with Michael and Robyn on the verandah of their bush retreat in the hills of Kilcunda, overlooking the ocean. As he always did, this giant of journalism gave me advice, spoke of stories old and new, including his upcoming journalistic expose of Turnbull's merciless ditching of the Uluru Statement. His pockets filled with a redundancy, rid of the anxiety of the Friday deadline and with his beloved Robby by his side, Michael seemed as light and as happy as I had ever seen him. As if he was flying over the water, leaning into his favourite left-hander. Go, Micky, go.

## Andrew Rule

HERALD SUN

**I**N SPORT, AS IN LIFE, WE SEE THE rare ones who transcend the game in ways that make the usual tribal loyalties and biases a little irrelevant. They are blessed with a blend of character and ability and humility not just hard to ignore but impossible not to like. It's an attribute that can't be counterfeited.

Anyone who saw Alex Jesaulanko play football for Carlton in his heyday knows that when some opposition thug managed to hurt him by playing dirty, everyone watching – even Collingwood

and Richmond fans, remarkably – would be a little ashamed.

Jezza was knocked out in shameful circumstances at Princes Park one winter Saturday in the early 1980s, and that great sports writer Peter McFarline wrote that a hush fell over the entire crowd because “one of the game's unaligned heroes was down and looked to be out for a very long time.”

He went on to describe how to the crowd's relief Jesaulenko struggled to his feet, rallied his players (remember captain-coaches?) and motivated

them to win the game for him the right way, “without any head-hunting”. Which they did, with just a teeny bit of head-hunting, McFarline noted.

I have remembered that reference to “unaligned heroes” half a lifetime. It came back at the weekend when one of the unaligned heroes of Australian journalism went down. But, tragically for his family and sadly for his scores of friends, and for thousands of readers who knew him through his work, Michael Gordon didn't get up again.

Michael died on Saturday morning the way we should all choose to – doing the thing he loved. Which, in Micky's case, was actually only one of the things he loved because he was good at so many things and interested in many more.

As it happens he was competing in an ocean swimming race at Phillip Island when his heart – surely the best part of him – stopped beating. But this famously fit man could as easily have been surfing with friends and family, as he did whenever and wherever he could.

Or, come March, he could have been cheering his Hawthorn Football Club, an obsession he inherited from his late father Harry Gordon—a war correspondent, Olympic sports writer and brilliant editor of this paper's forerunner, *The Sun News-Pictorial*.

Or Micky might have been supporting his old school's footy team—or caring for his new grandson (named Harry, naturally) for his daughter Sarah, oldest of the two adult children he shared with the love of his life, Robyn Carter. Or he could have been doing volunteer aid work at an indigenous outback community—or in Africa, where he spent many weeks with his son Scott late last year.

Then again, he might have been doing more of the journalism he began at the age of 17 and kept up until last week, a span of 45 years in which he did not just win the accolades of his peers and industry awards but something more important—the respect of the public and of the people he wrote about.

There are street-smart people in journalism, and some wise ones, too, as well as all the others. But anyone who knew Michael Gordon – at *The Herald* or *The Australian* or his longtime employer, *The Age*—didn't care whether he was smart or wise but only that he was fair and honest, decent and kind.

He had none of the bluster of the bully – he would blush at the very idea – but he was brave when it came to giving a voice to those who didn't have one.

He had an extraordinary range, from the humanitarian to the humane to the human. He was, of course, a longtime political writer who'd known every Prime Minister since Malcolm Fraser, but that never shook the love of sport he inherited from Harry, who in turn had inherited it from his own father, who had fought as a top-line professional boxer between the wars.

It was another fine sports writer, William Nack, who described the death of the greatest athlete he ever saw, a race-horse called Secretariat. Nack found it hard to believe that the champion's huge heart had stopped beating. It is one of the most touching pieces of writing you might see, and it is headed simply Pure Heart.

Which, in two words, is a perfect epitaph for our mate Micky Gordon. He was all heart, all pure. And none of us can believe it has stopped beating.



## John Silvester

THE AGE

## Michael Gordon: my friend, the real deal

I LAST SPOKE TO MICKY ON THURSDAY. It was about a refugee story I thought was up his alley – Michael had become a passionate voice for people who often could not be heard.

He told me he was just back from New South Wales where he had visited an old colleague from *The Age* who had been seriously ill.

He was delighted to report that the last scans were positive. Typical of Michael, he was there for others.

Super fit, Michael loved Phillip Island and was delighted when he clocked a certain birthday so he could compete as a senior in some of the competitions. Sometimes he would leave home at 4.30 am so that he would be surfing at dawn – before heading into the office.

He started to take as much pride in his veggie patch as the swag of professional awards he had won in decades at the top of his game.

In the office we would talk about our footy club, the Hawks, where he had taken over from his father, Harry, to update the history of the team in *The Hard Way*.

A serial hugger, you knew he was about to sit next to you when you received a massive slap on the back.

He was so conflicted in taking a redundancy from *The Age* as he really loved the place. On his last day, he tried to sneak out the back door because he hated the fuss and staff had developed a tradition of standing and applauding respected journos on their way out. I grabbed him and told him he needed to do the walk so I could film it for his children. And so, he made the emotional walk, bursting into tears when he reached the lift.

I pressed the wrong button on his phone. It didn't record.

I was at last year's Walkley Awards in Brisbane when he received the most outstanding contribution to journalism.

He and his lovely wife Robyn were beaming and his speech was typically measured and humble.

In a business full of blowhards, Michael was the real deal.

The last thing he said to me was, "Good to chat."

Hey Mick, the pleasure was all mine.

## Tony Wright

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

## Life is brief. Pluck the day and share it with friends

A VALUED MATE IS CELEBRATING his 70th birthday next month.

He's been insisting I attend the dinner he is giving to mark this venerable achievement.

The thing is that he has taken himself across the world, and is living in the exotic city of Tangier, Morocco.

Too far, I figured. Too difficult. Haven't got the time. Or the spare cash. Dithering, it became easy to offer excuses to myself.

And yet.

My friend will never have another 70th birthday.

Many years ago, I inquired of my grandfather what was the most important lesson his long life had offered him.

"Never leave yourself asking 'what if'," he said.

I was young then, and didn't quite understand how profound was this wisdom.

Almost 30 years ago a film called *Dead Poets Society* turned one of history's great poetic precepts into a modern cliché. "Carpe diem", instructed the star of the movie, Robin Williams, playing an inspirational English teacher.

Those two Latin words, meaning "seize (or more poetically, pluck) the day", were written just over 2000 years ago by the Roman poet Horace.

It is from one of Horace's Odes, which begins (and I'll spare you the Latin, and use one of the more straightforward

translations): "Ask not – we cannot know – what end the gods have set for you, for me"

And it ends: "Be wise, strain the wine; and since life is brief, prune back far-reaching hopes! Even while we speak, envious time has passed: pluck the day, putting as little trust as possible in tomorrow."

It's not far from my late grandfather's instruction to never leave yourself wondering "what if".

I have been pondering the advice a bit in recent times. It's age, of course. But it's also something much more.

In less than a year, some of the greats of my acquaintance have gone too early, leaving us to understand Horace's admonition that we cannot know what end the gods have set for any of us.

Last April, the satirist, writer and actor John Clarke did not survive a ramble in the bush on the slopes of the spookily-named Mount Abrupt.

A few of us gathered one night afterwards to take wine and consider one of Clarke's favourite poems about gaining sustenance from nature. "You are neither here nor there," a verse of it says, "A hurry through which known and strange things pass." John Clarke was just 68 and the poem, by Seamus Heaney, was called *Postscript*, which was the miserable truth of it.

The wonderful cartoonist of *The Age*, Ron Tandberg, died in the first days of

this year. Next month we'll celebrate his life when his last book of cartoons, *A Year of Madness*, will be launched at *The Age's* Media House Gallery.

Tandberg could not eat at the end, yet in one of our final phone conversations he wanted me to describe in detail the contents of my family's Christmas feast. He was still plucking the day, even if the essence of it was beyond him. Tandberg was 73 and had given us every day a cartoon explaining the strange nature of the world.

And then came the lightning-bolt loss last week of my longtime colleague and longer-time friend Michael Gordon.

Thousands of words have been written since about this decent, gifted and modest man. There is no need to repeat the tributes here, except to say that all of them are true. He used every day to try to make the world a better place for those he loved and served: his family, his friends, his colleagues, refugees consigned to distant islands and indigenous Australians. He surfed and swam and tended his garden, regularly doubting himself.

Friendship is a very particular thing, and I think ours was cemented a quarter-century ago when my family's golden retriever gave birth to a litter of puppies.

Knowing the pleasure Phoebe gave to our family, we gave the gentlest and prettiest of her pups to Michael and his wife Robyn and their two children, Sarah

and Scottie, so they might be as blessed as us. Michael called the pup Misty, and as the years went by, his children growing with the pup, he often brought stories of the pleasure she delivered.

Misty lived for an astonishing 18 years. When she could no longer go on, Michael couldn't come to work for a couple of days and when he did, we had a long, quiet lunch.

You can tell a bit about a man by the way he cares for his dog.

He loved the beach and the surf, and we both had retreats by the coast – his to the east of Melbourne, mine to the far south-west.

We promised each other we would spend time together at both places over the summer. But life got in the way – too far, too difficult, no time – and we were still talking about it on the phone the day before Michael went in an ocean swimming race at Phillip Island last weekend and took his final breath, leaving everyone who knew him and loved him in disbelief.

"What if," we were left asking, and the poetry of Horace never rang truer: "Even while we speak, envious time has passed."

I am off to Morocco next month. There's a good mate's birthday to attend.

We'll strain the wine. And pluck the day.

Life is brief.

## Ken Wyatt

Federal minister for Indigenous health

### THE AGE

Vale Michael Gordon, driven by an enduring sense of fairness and equity for all

VOICE" IS AT THE FOREFRONT OF my thoughts in the days since Michael Gordon's passing – his commentary, his consistency and most of all, his capacity to give voice to people and issues affecting countless thousands.

Barely a fortnight before his death we talked at length about the vexed subject of constitutional recognition and a voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I am haunted by his first words during that interview, that perfectly encapsulate the subtle but irresistible power of his journalism: "What I'm trying to do is not put anyone in the role of villain, but just to tell the story as it happened, so we can sort of learn from it. That's where I'm coming from."

When I entered Parliament in 2010, he was one of the first journalists to call me and talk about what it would mean to have an Indigenous person in the House of Representatives.

Our discussion was not centred on the vanity of history but on the importance of having Indigenous representation in the Parliament and equally, within the Coalition, though there had been great champions such as Fred Chaney, Ian Viner and others who had tirelessly promoted change for the better for Indigenous Australians.

I relished that conversation and many

since, because in politics you don't often have the chance for frank discussion on critical matters, sure that off-the-record confidences will not be betrayed.

In subsequent interviews, I backgrounded Michael to enhance his understanding and to share insights into my opinions and the thinking of other Indigenous leaders with whom I'd had similar conversations.

He respected the leaders he interacted with but what was crucial was how he covered Indigenous issues. Michael was a leader among an important group of journalists who have continually put the plight – and I use that word advisedly – of Aboriginal people in a reasoned and logical way.

His coverage was not overtly emotive, but the facts, his storytelling and his compassion moved us, nonetheless.

He constantly brought to the attention of Australians the injustices and the challenges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people faced and also examples of inaction by governments to address underlying issues.

During my last discussion, he asked if I still believed we would aspire to proceeding with recognition and the impact of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and an Aboriginal voice.

We shared thoughts on the importance of having Aboriginal input in the design

of policies and programs, along with the fostering a sense of empowerment to make more of a difference on the ground.

As always, he was determined to get the story right. He double-checked previous conversations, intent on creating a narrative of substance to lay out a measured, realistic approach to Indigenous recognition that could help change the focus from where we are now to where we should be in the future.

People like Michael are rare. He steered clear of sensationalism, instead he was driven by an enduring sense of fairness and equity for all, not just Indigenous people.

His recent stories on Manus Island highlighted his passion for social justice and his drive to see equality prevail. As always, we heard many voices, with poignant messages for all of us to consider.

While our thoughts and condolences are now with his family and close friends, there is a sense of sadness that extends from his hometown of Melbourne, to Mutitjulu and far beyond.

We have lost a good man, an incredible reporter and an unparalleled mentor to many.

So, Michael, I thank you for showing us the worlds within and around our nation.

I thank you for not being afraid to cover the hard stuff. You certainly weren't afraid to prick the consciences of members of Parliament and the broader consciousness of Australian society.

You heightened awareness of the challenges that still face many Indigenous people and others in a first world country where choice and opportunity prevail for the majority.

The nation I remember while growing up in the 1950s and 1960s is vastly different to the Australia we know now, largely because of the awareness of challenging issues raised by you and other dedicated journalists and storytellers.

When you received your Walkley Award last October for Most Outstanding Contribution to Journalism, you said you were "overwhelmed, humbled and delighted" and your biggest debt was "to those whose stories I have told".

There are so many of us who will forever owe you a debt of gratitude for speaking from the heart.

Farewell my friend.

was to me. He was the closest friend a person could have. He was a father figure. A brother. A role model, and he was my colleague when I worked at *The Age* as an information consultant.

"He introduced me to his partner Robyn, and his children, and I became a part of his family. He helped me with job opportunities. He was always there for me and I was there for him. I could pick up the phone any time and speak to him. We would meet for coffee, go for lunch and dinner. He would take me on drives to Phillip Island. He took me to the footy and to the beaches where he went surfing. He discussed his designs for the holiday house he was building. He introduced me to the Australian way of life.

"We hugged each other whenever we met. We sent each other messages. When I was feeling down, he would tap me on the shoulder and say, 'You're OK. You're strong.' We would talk about everything, or we said nothing and enjoyed each other's company. Or we would just have a laugh.

"What can I say? We connected."

Michael Gordon met Ali Mullaie in April 2005, when he was the first journalist allowed on Nauru during the final phase of the Pacific Solution, Mark 1. Ali, then 22, was one of the last 54 detainees still stranded on the island. He has a clear memory of their first meeting.

"It was in the computer lab in Nauru College, where I was a teacher of English and computer science. The connection was instant. I could feel it. I was appointed his interpreter. We spent a lot of time walking around the island. He wondered if my name was Ali or Sir, because everywhere I went, the students called me sir. He saw how they ran up to

me and how we walked together. He saw that the locals respected me because I taught their children, and because I was engaged with the community. He understood my achievement.

"On Nauru, I taught myself English and computer science. I did not waste my time. But I had no family. Michael could truly hear me. Until then no one outside Nauru knew me. No one had told my story. And because he was there, and spent time with me, and with those inside the detention camp, and because he listened, he wrote the truth about our despair, and our aspirations."

Ali stresses: "He did not see me as a victim. Our friendship had nothing to do with this. It was not based on sympathy. He was human, and he saw me as human.

"I want to get the words right, as if Michael is listening, and can feel what I am saying. We were born in separate countries, and came from different cultures. I was Hazara, but it made no difference. Our friendship was not about the past. It was about now, and about the future. It was about total trust, and about two human beings. Two Australians. I deeply miss him."

The public knew Michael through his ground-breaking journalism about the plight of refugees and detained asylum seekers. But his involvement went far beyond the call of his profession. Michael was a loyal friend to some of the people he wrote about.

The two strands were distinct, but closely interwoven. This can be seen in Michael's relationship with Manus Island detainee Loghman Sawari. When Loghman heard the news of Michael's death, he too was shattered. "Michael will always be in my heart," he says. "He

## Arnold Zable

### THE AGE

#### 'You're strong': Refugees remember the friendship and support of Michael Gordon

WHEN ALI MULLAIE HEARD THE news of Michael Gordon's sudden death, he was shattered. Since then he has not slept well.

"I keep thinking and dreaming of Michael, and the many things that were between us," he says. "It is impossible to find the words that describe who he

is one great man I met from Australia. I hope I will meet him again in heaven.”

In a report published in September 2015, Michael wrote: “When Loghman Sawari became the first refugee to attempt suicide after being released from the detention centre on Papua New Guinea’s Manus Island, the reaction was as swift as it was brutal. The teenager was transferred not in an ambulance, but in the back of the 10-seat vehicle of the island’s police commissioner, and not to the hospital, but to the local lock-up, where he spent 24 hours in a small cell with about 20 locals.”

Michael continued to report Loghman’s story over the ensuing years. He wrote of his daring escape to Fiji, his arrest and deportation, his jailing in Port Moresby, and the campaign for his release. He worked in close consultation with Loghman’s friend and supporter, writer and advocate Janet Galbraith.

“Michael’s concern for Loghman’s personal welfare always came first,” she says. “He developed a personal relationship with him. Whenever he went to PNG he made sure he spent time with him. He was distressed by his vulnerability, and the immense suffering he endured at such a young age. When he was on the run, in Fiji, Michael called him many times and counselled him. His deep concern for his safety was his priority. Writing the story was the last resort.”

The two strands – Michael as journalist and friend – are evident in his mentoring of Rohingya detainee Imran Mohammad. When he was 16, Imran fled Myanmar in fear of his life. After a terrifying boat journey from Bangladesh to Malaysia and time as an indentured slave, Imran made it to Indonesia.

His boat was intercepted en route to Australia and he is now in his fifth year of exile on Manus Island. Imran taught himself English and began writing about the plight of fellow detainees.

“I studied Michael’s work and approach to journalism,” Imran says. “I read many articles which were written by him. I found his email address and sent my articles off to him. He took time to read and edit my writing, like a father checks his child’s homework. He used to provide me with very useful suggestions about how to write powerful articles.

“One of the important things I learned from him was how to organise an article with less words by keeping to the main message. It was very challenging for me, but I started to understand what he was trying to teach me. We communicated via email, but after a while we stayed in touch by WhatsApp. It became a personal friendship, and I met him when he came to Manus in 2017.”

Reflecting on his impressions of Michael, Imran concludes: “He was a very calm, caring, sympathetic and passionate person. There was a feeling of safety in his company. He made the atmosphere very pleasant when I met him. He was more than just a friend to me. He was like a father.”

When Kurdish-Iranian detainee Behnam Satah heard the news of Michael’s death, he wept. “Michael was a brother,” he says. “He was always checking on me and asking how I am and if I need anything. I cried for a long time. He was like family to me.”

Behnam witnessed the murder of his friend and roommate, fellow Kurdish-Iranian Reza Barati, during a night of violence on February 17, 2014. He saw

him bashed to death by six people. Only two PNG locals have been charged and convicted. Despite ongoing death threats and intimidation by one of the convicted, and the denial of witness protection, Behnam gave evidence at the trial.

“Michael was supporting me during my worst time in life while I was under threats and stress,” Behnam says. “Describing him in words is very hard because there are no words that match his personality. I wish I could talk to him one more time and hear his voice again. I wish I could attend his funeral. Please buy flowers for me and give it to his family.”

“As a journalist, Michael was always interested in the details,” says social advocate Di Cousens, who assisted him in liaising with Behnam and other men on Manus island. “He always looked for the evidence. He asked for documents, photos of the injuries and details about the bashings, the attempted suicides. He chased the facts – the fact that Behnam had a terrible fungal infection in his hands which went untreated.

“The fact that one detainee was beaten by two guards – one inside the room and one outside – after he was cut down after an attempted suicide by hanging. He asked to be notified when incidents occurred even in the middle of the night.”

Bearing witness, and engaging for years on end with the personal lives of detained asylum seekers, can take its toll. Janet Galbraith, who often met with Michael to discuss the ongoing horror, observes: “Like those of us who have seen it close up for so long, Michael began to feel so ineffectual, so helpless. It troubled him deeply. The people on

Manus are still dying. People are going mad. It has not stopped. This eventually got to Michael.”

Michael’s distress can be sensed in many of his stories. Reflecting upon Loghman Sawari’s ordeal, he wrote: “What compelled the 19-year-old to turn a towel into a makeshift noose, attach it to a rafter outside his room and step from a chair to oblivion is hardly a mystery. His bottom lip trembles uncontrollably as he tries to explain that anger, despair and an all-consuming sense of hopelessness propelled him.”

In a piece published in December 2015 headlined “My Manus Island Nightmare”, Michael writes of being haunted by the image of Loghman Sawari breaking down while he is trying to explain, on camera, how much he misses the mother who believes he has made it safely to Australia and is doing well.

Contemplating the immovability of Australian government policy, Michael despairs: “There is a view that the situation on Manus, like that on Nauru, is unsustainable, and that eventually the penny will drop that the end does not justify the means, that punishing one group of people endlessly in order to deter others is immoral, and that there is another way to achieve the same policy objective. It used to be my view. Now I’m not so sure.”

Michael has left a legacy of work that documents the brutal consequences of Australia’s offshore detention centres. When I asked Imran Mohammad why Michael’s death has been so deeply felt by the men exiled on Manus Island, he replied: “He shone a powerful light on our plight for many years. He wrote about our lives with honesty and great



respect. We reached out to him whenever there was a problem on Manus. He was our great voice out there. It is like we lost our right shoulder.”

But Michael also left us with the antidote to that cruelty – his friendships with those who continue to endure it. My fondest memory of Michael is of him attending the social gatherings at the Fitzroy Learning Network back in the early 2000s. “Party therapy” is how those gatherings were known by Anne Horrigan-Dixon, under whose leadership

the network became a refuge for many asylum seekers stranded on temporary visas.

Michael was a gentle presence at the parties. Typically he stood to one side, beer in hand. Listening. Observing. Quietly nurturing friendships. He was deeply moved. He understood this was the heart of the story: community, and healing. A means of giving voice to the voiceless.

### Tributes flow in Parliament House for journalist Michael Gordon

MICHAEL KOZIOL, THE AGE

A flower for a fine man

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, journalists observe the country’s leaders from up high. They are supposed to look down on the bearpit, keeping witness and casting judgment – a symbolism sometimes lost in a system of co-dependence and insider privilege. But Michael Gordon remained above the fray – always.

From his usual perch in the gallery – front row, a few seats from the wall – he would sit studiously, taking notes, parsing the chaos and carry-on below. On Monday, though his seat was vacant, his spirit was manifest in a single Banksia flower laid by his much-loved colleagues, and in the words of his friends on the floor of the chamber.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten were some of the politicians to pay tribute to Age journalist Michael Gordon in parliament.

Liberal MP Russell Broadbent recalled Micky taking him to the San Remo Hotel, where Phillip Island meets the mainland, and pointing out the Channel Challenge honour board, whose inaugural race Gordon won in 1986.

“Michael’s zest for life was inescapably infectious; his loss inescapably immeasurable,” Broadbent told the Parliament.

Gordon, 62, died at the weekend while taking part in another ocean swim at his beloved Phillip Island. He joined *The Age* at 17 and served her for 37 of his 45 years in journalism, leaving the newspaper only last year after a lauded career covering federal politics and national affairs – often the dark and troubling corners of Australia’s relationship with its first peoples, and with refugees.

“He loved this country,” said Broadbent. “He wrote for a kinder, more reasonable and compassionate nation.

There was no condemnation in Michael, not even qualified condemnation ... it was always about you.”

Paying tribute at the outset of the year’s first question time, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull remembered Gordon as “the personification of calm”. He was a journalist who knew his principles but would never rush to judgment; a man to whom sharing came naturally and to whom hubris was anathema, Mr Turnbull said – observations that would be echoed by his colleagues at *The Age*.

“When an article had Michael’s byline, you knew that what was written was sincerely believed and to be believed,” Mr Shorten said.

“He was a person of complete integrity, absolutely trustworthy – an honest soul, and a compassionate one. Mick took the best side of everybody, and

I think he believed in the fundamental decency of politics.”

Around the Banksia, in its little glass bottle adorned with a gold bow, the departed scribe’s colleagues and friends welled with tears. Gordon was the standard-bearer of the joint, the exemplar of the business. Without him, everyone else would be lesser.

Down below, channelling his late friend’s optimism, Broadbent spoke of Gordon’s latest project, based on interviews with former prime ministers John Howard and Julia Gillard.

“It was like he had a new toy, a new opportunity. It was like his first piece ever,” Broadbent said.

“He was a fine, fine, fine man. He honoured me and all of those around him, and he honoured this place, and he honoured us in his death.”

## Tweets

## ORDERED ALPHABETICALLY

■ TONY ABBOTT,  
FORMER PRIME MINISTER

Wonderful to participate in this year's #coleclassic swim at Manly. Of course, couldn't help but think of Michael Gordon in the course of the swim, he was a fine journalist and a wonderful human being and will be much missed.

Like so many others associated with the federal parliament, I am in shock at the premature passing of Michael Gordon while participating in an ocean swim today. It's so typical of his vitality and desire to live life to the full that he should have been out and about when tragedy struck.

Michael was a warm and engaging human being as well as one of our finest political journalists. He was rarely content with just reading source material and talking to protagonists. Wherever possible he wanted to "live the story" by, for instance, actually riding in the Pollie Pedal or surfing with a would-be PM.

Like most journalists, he was opinionated and I often respectfully disagreed with him. But he was careful to try to give credit where it was due. That's why he will be a big loss to our polity as well as to his grieving family and friends.

■ ABDUL AZIZ ADAM,  
FORMER DETAINEE, MANUS

Rest In Peace brother Micheal. The world lost another great man.

■ DENISE ALLEN,  
FORMER VICTORIAN MP

Very sad to hear of Michael Gordon's passing today. His articles were always fair and balanced, thought-provoking and thoughtful. Vale Michael. Journalism has lost one of its best.

## ■ AMNESTY AUSTRALIA

Michael Gordon was a compassionate defender of human rights. Condolences to family, colleagues, friends.

■ DANIEL ANDREWS,  
PREMIER VICTORIA

Just awful to hear of Michael Gordon's passing. A wonderful journalist – tough, principled and fair. Vale.

## ■ ASYLUM INSIGHT

Award winning journalist Michael Gordon dies on Saturday, aged 62. His coverage of Australian asylum policy was fair, balanced and thorough. Read his piece from April 2017, documenting the stories of asylum seekers and refugees on Nauru and Manus Island.

■ PAUL AUSTIN,  
JOURNALIST

The saddest news. Micky was a role model, mentor, inspiration, confidant and friend.

■ MICHAEL BACHELARD,  
INVESTIGATIONS EDITOR,  
THE AGE

Michael Gordon, we loved you. We admired you. We aspired to be you. We'll miss you terribly, but you left so much of yourself behind, in the people you mentored, the journalism you produced and the example you set.

■ MARK BAILEY MP,  
QUEENSLAND

Vale Michael Gordon – a great writer whose Keating book was one of the best. Deserved so much longer.

■ MARK BAKER,  
JOURNALIST

Vale Michael Gordon – outstanding journalist, compassionate man and dear friend. You were one of a kind, Micky.

■ PATRICIA BARRACLOUGH,  
JOURNALIST

No one can "become" a journalist like Michael Gordon. In a way, he was born to it – and then spent a lifetime doing the hard yards. He is proof that great journalism needs integrity, compassion and curiosity.

■ PAUL BARRY,  
ABC MEDIA WATCH, AND  
AUTHOR

So sad. Michael Gordon was a great journalist and a lovely bloke. Far too young to die.

■ MICHELLE BENNETT,  
DIRECTOR  
COMMUNICATIONS, HUMAN  
RIGHTS LAW CENTRE

Michael was a brilliant journalist, an inspiring writer but above all, he was a wonderful person. His work on our offshore detention shame was extraordinary. The world will be sadder without his words and heart.

■ BEN BIRCHALL,  
CRIKEY.COM

If anyone in media wants a guidebook on how to act and how to treat people, seems like Michael Gordon is the perfect case study.

■ PAUL BONGIORNO,  
POLITICAL COLUMNIST

So sad to hear of the sudden death of former much respected gallery journalist Michael Gordon of the Age. A giant of the craft has left us too soon.

## ■ CUI BONO, SURFER

Back in the 70s Michael Gordon along with the founders of Rip Curl, Doug (Claw) Warbrick and Brian Singer, Dick Hoole and Jack McCoy started a surf magazine in Torquay called Backdoor. Vale salty sea dog.

■ BEHROUZ BOOCHANI,  
NOVELIST, JOURNALIST  
MANUS ISLAND

I would like to share my deep sadness on hearing the news about Michael Gordon, and send my sincere condolences to his family. He was a wonderful, intelligent person who was always on the side of truth. The refugees in Manus have lost a brother. Such terrible news. #Manus

■ CHLOE BOOKER,  
JOURNALIST, THE AGE

Devastated to hear Michael Gordon has died. I admired his ethics, kindness, warmth and pursuit of truth and justice. He used his position for the betterment of the voiceless. A lovely man and a true legend of journalism, who remained accessible to younger journalists. Vale.

■ LATIKA BOURKE,  
FAIRFAX JOURNALIST

We've lost one of the finest and most humble journalists. Micky was a true gentleman. His sudden death is as sad as it is shocking.

■ MIKE BOWERS,  
PHOTOGRAPHER,  
THE GUARDIAN

I can't believe this he was one of the greats, R.I.P. Micky G

■ TIMOTHY BOYLE,  
COLUMNIST THE SUNDAY AGE

Michael Gordon brought me to the Age with his generosity and encouragement. I'll miss him.

■ PENNY BRADFIELD,  
PHOTOGRAPHER

Michael Gordon was one of the finest people I've ever met. It was a true joy to work with him. Farewell Micky, you will be missed by so many. Xx

■ BRIDGET BRENNAN,  
ABC

Vale Michael Gordon. Such a lovely man, beautiful writer and inspirational journalist. What a privilege to have met him last year at Uluru.

■ JENNIE BROCKIE,  
SBS

So terribly sad to hear this. One of our very best and a truly lovely man. Vale Michael Gordon.

■ BOB BROWN,  
FORMER LEADER  
AUSTRALIAN GREENS

Vale Michael Gordon, outstanding journalist, great Australian. Bob.

■ LINDA BURNEY, MP

Michael Gordon was a wonderful person. My thoughts are with his family and friends. A true storyteller.

■ ANDREW BUTCHER

Everyone loved Micky Gordon, and he loved just about everyone back. Wonderful man. I'm so sad for Robyn, Sarah and Scotty.

■ TERRI BUTLER, MP

I am so sorry to hear of the loss of Michael Gordon. A shock.

■ ANTHONY BYRNE, MP

Mourning the passing of a great Journalist and human being Michael Gordon. To gain an insight into how a good journalist he was go no further than this definitive book on Paul Keating. A very good man who will be sorely missed. My deepest sympathies to Michael's family and friends.

■ ADAM CAREY,  
JOURNALIST, THE AGE

This is devastating and hard to fathom. My heart aches for his family.

■ BEN CARROLL, MP,  
VICTORIA

Shocked to hear of the passing of #MichaelGordon – I received his early and insightful biography of #PaulKeating for my 21st birthday from a dear and late friend which I'll always treasure. Condolences to the Gordon family. He was one of the greats.

■ BARRIE CASSIDY,  
ABC

An awful shock. One of the nicest blokes you would ever meet.

■ ROHAN CONNOLLY,  
FORMER AGE FOOTY WRITER

Mick wrote about politics with empathy & compassion, traits increasingly rare. He loved his footy, music & surfing & spoke of all of them with real insight. Above all, he was just a decent human being. We've lost a good one, people.

■ HENRIETTA COOK,  
JOURNALIST

RIP Micky. Taken from us too soon. A beautiful man who was a mentor to many in the newsroom. Always humble, gentle and encouraging. He gave a voice to the voiceless and stood up for what was important. The world is a better place because of him.

■ MIRIAM COSIC,  
JOURNALIST

Oh no, the wonderful Michael Gordon has died. A giant of Australian journalism: a clear-eyed observer of life, a nuanced analyst and a beautiful writer. Vale

■ TOM COWIE,  
JOURNALIST, THE AGE

Vale, Michael Gordon. Just this week he shared one of his contacts with me.

■ ANNABEL CRABB

This pretty much sums it up. Michael was an unremittingly decent and lovely person. Ego in inverse proportion to talent. A writer of great influence, who lived for his family and the ocean.

■ DAVID CROWE,  
POLITICAL JOURNALIST  
FAIRFAX

Michael had so much still to write. We should have been reading his journalism for years to come.

■ ANDREW DARBY,  
JOURNALIST

Proud to have sat in "Siberia" beside Michael Gordon. And to have worked for the mastheads he did so much to embellish.

■ AZ DASTYARI,  
DTY DIRECTOR CASTAN  
CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS,  
MONASH UNI

Broke my heart to hear that Michael Gordon had passed. Such an honourable, generous, kind man and an extraordinary journalist. Let's hope his legacy inspires more journalists to question abuse and fight for better.

■ LISA DAVIES,  
EDITOR SMH

For a man renowned as unflinchingly fair, his passing is entirely the opposite. Lovely piece by @markgkenny capturing the grief felt by so many this weekend.

■ PROF. M DAVIS

This man, my friend. This is devastating. Aus has few journalists who are forensic in their reporting of Indigenous Affairs. With the dialogues and Uluru, he was not deterred by trivial distractions as news; he understood the enormity of what mob had done.

■ PAUL DALEY,  
JOURNALIST

Simply heartbreaking. Mick was a mentor & mate who spoke up for the powerless and had the best moral antenna in the game. A lovely man leaving a giant legacy of words and wonderful deeds

■ HUGH DE KRETZER,  
EXEC DIRECTOR, HUMAN  
RIGHTS LAW CENTRE

So so sad to hear Michael Gordon has died. A brilliant journalist and thoroughly honorable, decent person. A huge loss.

■ MR DENMORE,  
COMMENTATOR ON SOCIAL  
MEDIA

I always sought out Michael Gordon's byline. He was thorough and fair and always shed new and important light on his subjects.

■ SENATOR RICHARD  
DI NITALE

Devastated to hear of Michael Gordon's passing. An outstanding journalist but an even better person. He will be missed.

■ AMANDA DUNN,  
THE CONVERSATION

Am still reeling about this. Gentle, thoughtful, man; wonderful journalist.

■ HEATHER EWART

A true gentleman, honest and principled, and a fine friend.

■ THE FEDERAL  
PARLIAMENTARY PRESS  
GALLERY

We are devastated by the sudden loss of Michael Gordon, a dear friend to many and an honoured colleague to all of us who cover federal parliament. Michael was an outstanding member of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery. He served readers and the nation over four decades with his measured reporting and sharp analysis of

federal politics and national affairs. He held our politicians to account while earning and keeping their respect. He was rightly honoured last year with the Walkley Award for most outstanding contribution to journalism. More than that, he was a mentor and an exemplar to younger journalists. He set the highest standard of integrity in journalism. He was a generous friend and a lovely man.

Writing on his career last year, Michael said: “Often enough, my purpose seemed to be giving voice to those who didn’t have one.” His work should be an example to us all and his life should be an inspiration to us all.

■ **FITZROY REDS FOOTY CLUB**

Vale Michael Gordon, a brilliant journalist but also a ‘Redder’ back in the day.

■ **MARTIN FLANAGAN**

Michael Gordon: one of the most sensitive men I’ve met, a journalist of integrity and clear intelligence. My first sports editor, opened doors for me. Believed in the best that journalism could be and do. Like many others, I loved him.

■ **BRENDON GALE, CEO RICHMOND FC**

Rest in peace Michael Gordon. A profound and terrible loss.

■ **STEPHEN GILHAM, FORMER HAWTHORN FOOTBALLER**

Very sad to hear of the passing of Michael Gordon in such tragic circumstances this morning. Michael was a terrific bloke and his passing today is a great loss. My thoughts and prayers are with his family at this terribly sad and shocking time. RIP Michael

■ **JULIA GILLARD**

Just over two weeks ago, I was interviewed by Michael Gordon. In every way, he was clearly relishing life. Enjoying doing freelance journalistic work, writing a book and proudly doting on his first grandchild. I am devastated he won’t get the opportunity to live out the happy years of family time and continuing creativity he was planning. So horribly cruel. Michael was a thoroughly decent man. His approach to journalism was to thoughtfully tell the truth. The caliber of his work meant he stood out in the world of political

journalism. But he stood out for his personal qualities too. Michael was softly spoken, caring and kind. Whatever topic a conversation with Michael started on, it always ended up including him sharing news of his family, who were at the centre of his life. Everything about his life with his wife Robyn, his son Scott, his daughter Sarah and grandson Harry seemed to be a source of continuing delight for Michael. It is impossible to imagine how acute the pain of Michael’s loss is for them right now. I offer my sincerest and deepest condolences

■ **JOSH GORDON, FORMER AGE STATE REPORTER**

So deeply saddened. Michael Gordon is a huge loss to journalism. I will miss him so much as a friend and mentor. He was a gentleman and an inspiration.

■ **MICHELLE GRIFFIN, NEWS DIRECTOR, THE AGE**

The greatest journalist, the loveliest man. We’re all heartbroken here. Vale Micky.

■ **ROSLYN GRUNDY, CO-EDITOR AGE GOOD FOOD GUIDE**

I only half-jokingly called Michael Gordon the conscience of *The Age*. I’m devastated he’s died so young. Such a good journalist and a fine man.

■ **BRUCE GUTHRIE**

Started in journalism the same day, on rival papers. Ran *The Sunday Age* together in the nineties. Friends for 40 years plus. Never met a finer journalist or a finer man than Michael. Devastated.

■ **BIANCA HALL**

The world has lost a remarkable man, and we’re all poorer for his loss. He was a giant of journalism, who gave power and voice to the afflicted, and afflicted the powerful. And he was a bloody good bloke to boot. Vale.

■ **SENATOR SARAH HANSON-YOUNG**

Heartbroken & shocked. Micheal was the very best journalist, but more importantly one of the very best people. A remarkable human. Caring, compassionate and strong.

■ **AL HARRIS, FREELANCE WRITER**

Just heard of Michael’s passing. I had the great privilege of taking Michael on a visit to Cape York for his book on reconciliation many years ago. He was a very good man with heart and a strong sense of justice and he loved Neil Young. He’ll be missed

■ **MARK HAWTHORNE, PUBLISHER FAIRFAX**

A giant of journalism and a wonderful man. Our love and thoughts are with Micky’s family.

■ **HAWTHORN FOOTBALL CLUB**

Vale Michael Gordon. A great journalist and a great Hawthorn man.

■ **IAN HENDERSON, ABC**

Scrupulous, dogged, compassionate and kind.. Michael Gordon was simply the best of us. Gone way too soon but his shining example lives on. Heartfelt sympathy to Robyn, Scott, Sarah & young Harry.

■ **DARREN HINCH, SENATOR**

Stunned, saddened, by sudden death of Michael Gordon. Now we’ve lost two journalistic giants, father and son. Harry and Michael. Shit.

■ **GREG HUNT MP**

Deeply sorry to hear of Michael Gordon’s passing – a truly fine person – I had the privilege of both working on stories & swimming w him.

■ **STEPHEN JONES, MP**

Michael Gordon was an outstanding journalist who wrote stories that really matter in a way that made a difference

■ **KON KARAPANAGIOTIDIS, CEO, AUSTRALIAN ASYLUM SEEKERS RESOURCE CENTRE**

Vale Michael Gordon. He was a man of great integrity, principle and purpose. A fearless ally to #refugees, who would tell the human stories years before most media dared or care to. He will be missed by so many. My love to his family

■ **PATRICIA KARVELAS, ABC**

Michael Gordon was one of a kind. His Aboriginal affairs reporting was an inspiration to me. He delivered the most important stories on this country’s unfinished business to everybody. Fair and balanced, but always passionate. He actually cared.

■ **FRAN KELLY**

And what an outstanding journalist he was ... brave and clever and insightful and empathic. And just a great human being. Goodbye Micky!



■ SEAN KELLY

Genuinely shocked, and terribly saddened, to hear that Michael Gordon has left us. He had a deep understanding of what was important, and the ability, integrity, and determination to share that with others. A beautiful man, a brilliant journalist.

■ MISHA KETCH, THE CONVERSATION

So very sad about the loss of Michael Gordon. A man of empathy, honesty and integrity. A loss to journalism and all who knew him.

■ GEOFF KITNEY, JOURNALIST

Michael Gordon epitomised what was best in journalism. We must honour his memory by striving for his standards.

■ MARK KNIGHT, HERALD SUN CARTOONIST

Farewell to the much loved & respected Michael Gordon. I will never forget the time we travelled America together as 2 young correspondents covering the '88 US election from Oregon to Florida. Seeing you work inspired me then & for the entirety of your journalistic career mate.

■ MATTHEW KNOTT

Gutted to hear about the loss of Michael Gordon, such a gentle, generous man and inspiring journalist. I'll always be grateful for the time I got to spend with him at *The Age* bureau in Canberra.

■ MARCIA LANGTON, WRITER, ANTHROPOLOGIST

I am very sad to learn that #michaelgordon has passed. Condolences to his family, friends & colleagues. He was a great man, good, kind, intelligent, ethical. Vale Michael Gordon. I will miss you & your inspiring writing.

■ HARRY LARSEN

Even in the back bar of the John Curtin, Michael Gordon remained a gentleman. Huge loss.

■ ANDREW LEIGH, MP

Shocked to learn of the death of Michael Gordon. Loved his Keating bio as a kid, and found him thoughtful & engaged in our conversations.

■ ADRIAN LOWE, FAIRFAX

Michael so generous to me when I was starting out. Thoughts with his family.

■ WAYNE LUBBEY PHOTOGRAPHER

My deepest sympathy goes to his wife Robyn and children, Scott and Sarah, and his broader family. A beautiful man

■ JOHN LYONS, ABC

Farewell, Michael Gordon. As a person he was thoroughly decent. As a journalist he touched a generation of other journalists, mentoring hundreds. His commitment to fairness and social justice shone through his journalism for decades. A huge loss.

■ JUSTIN MADDEN, FORMER MP, VICTORIA

Sad to hear the passing of Michael Gordon, a giant of Australian Journalism. My thoughts are with his family & colleagues.

■ SAMANTHA MAIDEN, SKY NEWS

A beautiful man and a great journalist. This will come as a great shock to many readers who loved him.

■ DAVID MANNE, HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER

Devastating news: Vale Michael Gordon. A brilliant journalist, beautiful man & friend. He gave voice to the voiceless.

■ PETER MARTIN, AGE, ABC

One of the best there is, in every way there is. Michael Gordon left us today, too soon.

■ JAMES MASSOLA, CHIEF POLITICAL REPORTER FAIRFAX

Vale Micky Gordon; a great writer; an asker of the hard questions; a man with a conscience, unafraid to speak on behalf of the voiceless; a legend of Australian journalism.

■ JACQUELINE MALEY, JOURNALIST FAIRFAX

This is so shocking. There was no one kinder. He was too young. Life is too short.

■ JULIE MAY, JOURNALIST

Shocking and tragic news about Michael Gordon's passing. A huge loss for Australia and his many colleagues + readers. Michael leaves a huge compassion, justice and integrity-shaped hole in his beloved country. Vale and thank you.

■ STEPHEN MAYNE, JOURNALIST

This is so sad at 62 – and whilst staying fit swimming for goodness sake. Michael Gordon was a fabulous journalist. He will be sorely missed:

■ CATHERINE MCGREGOR, JOURNALIST

Absolutely gutted and stunned to read of the death of colleague Michael Gordon. Prolific professional and passionate journalist. Adhered to the highest standards of integrity and decency. Can't believe it. Bless those he has left behind.

■ FRANK MCGUIRE, MP, VICTORIA

Devastating news that Michael Gordon has died. He gave journalism a good name. Authentic and insightful, Michael provided a voice for people rarely heard and without power. Love to Robyn and family.

■ TOM MCILROY, FAIRFAX JOURNALIST

Vale Michael Gordon. Such sad news for his friends and family.

■ NICK MCKENZIE, JOURNALIST, THE AGE

Vale Michael Gordon. Friend, mentor, legendary journalist, voice for asylum seekers and others without a voice. Spared respectfully with Keating, Howard, etc. Died in the ocean, sun on his back. What a wave you rode Mickey, what a wave...

■ SENATOR NICK MCKIM

Vale Michael. A brave and true voice for refugees and people seeking asylum.

■ ANDREW MEARES, PHOTOGRAPHER CANBERRA PRESS GALLERY

I was so privileged to work closely alongside Michael Gordon. His calm intensity for recognising the moment, the humanity & the purpose of journalism will stay with me forever. Thanks for that and all the hugs Micky

■ MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS ALLIANCE

A tragic loss to Australian journalism. Vale @mgordon\_fairfax, one of the best we've ever seen.

■ CHRISTINE MILNE, FORMER LEADER AUSTRALIAN GREENS

Vale Michael Gordon: a sensitive, gifted man dedicated to justice. I honour his courage writing about plight of asylum seekers and refugees.

■ RONALD MIZEN, AFR JOURNALIST

Terribly sad news. Vale Michael Gordon. A brilliant journalist and a lovely person to deal with.

■ LAWRENCE MONEY,  
JOURNALIST

Son of my first editor, the late Harry Gordon – both true gentlemen. So sad to hear this.

■ GAVEN MORRIS,  
DIRECTOR ABC NEWS

This is terrible, shocking news. Such a gentleman of journalism. His speech on accepting the Walkley Contribution to Journalism just a few months ago brought tears to many of us there. Vale Michael Gordon, one of the true greats.

■ MUMS FOR REFUGEES

Michael: We honour your searing, tireless and heartfelt reporting on Australia's abusive offshore detention regime. Rest well, legend.

■ KATHERINE MURPHY,  
THE GUARDIAN

Michael Gordon was my friend, a brilliant mentor, and a political journalist of the highest integrity. He spoke for people without power. He served the truth, with great diligence and humility. He didn't waste a minute. I can't believe he left without saying goodbye. Vale.

■ PAUL MURPHY,  
CEO MEAA

Awful news. A huge and tragic loss. Condolences to family, friends and colleagues.

■ GHULAM MUSTAFA,  
MANUS

Michael Gordon, rest in peace brother ... Manus will remember you. So early you left us... need long time to fill this blank. #Manus

■ LAURIE OAKES,  
NINE NETWORK

Michael Gordon was one of the nicest and best. A terrible loss.

■ BRENDAN O'CONNOR, MP

Vale Michael Gordon. Top journalist. As passionate as he was compassionate. Wore his heart on his sleeve. Wonderful company. Word was his bond. Condolences to his friends and family.

■ KELLY O'DWYER, MP

Michael Gordon was such a kind and thoughtful man. He made a vast contribution to Australian journalism. My thoughts and deepest sympathies are with his family at this time.

■ OLD CAREY FC

The OCGFC community is saddened to hear of the passing of Michael Gordon, a great Carey man, our thoughts are with Michael's family.

■ MIKI PERKINS,  
SOCIAL EDITOR, THE AGE

This is devastating. You were the heart and ethical compass of our newsroom, and so very kind. We miss you already.

■ TANYA PLIBERSEK, MHR

A tragedy. An enormous loss to journalism and our nation. Michael was talented, brave, and honest. A true gentleman. He will be greatly missed. My thoughts and sympathies go to his friends and family at this difficult time.

■ TEX, POLLSTER

Vale Michael Gordon. A straight shooter who used real sources, did extensive research and told the truth. A rare professional. Very sad news indeed.

■ EMMA QUAYLE,  
FORMER JOURNALIST,  
THE AGE

Micky. You kind, caring, compassionate, beautiful man. You were the champion of so many people. You will be so missed.

■ MOIRA RAYNER,  
FORMER VICTORIAN  
COMMISSIONER FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUAL  
OPPORTUNITY

I acknowledge the great contribution of Michael Gordon to the human heart of our state and the truth of our human qualities of compassion and kindness. Su devour. I will remember you.

■ NICHOLAS REECE,  
MELBOURNE CITY  
COUNCILLOR

Devastated to learn of passing of legendary journalist and author Michael Gordon. Honoured to spend time with him during recent weeks @unimelb. His articles on "Howard on Gun Control" & "Gillard on Women" show just how much he still had to contribute...

■ REFUGEE COUNCIL

Devastated. Beautiful, humble man, lion of a journalist and one of the few left who continued to fight against injustice and for the rights of the marginalised – inc. his stand against brutalisation of people seeking asylum

■ AMY REMEIKIS,  
WRITER

So incredibly heartbroken. A mentor, a friend, a giant. He told me once to "be good, be kind" and he embodied both in ways we need so much more of. He changed the way I looked at my craft before we met. He changed how I live and think after. I'm heartsick

■ MATTHEW RIMMER,  
ACADEMIC

Michael Gordon did his very best to shine a light on the horror of offshore detention of refugees in Australia.

■ SUSAN RIMMER

Vale Michael Gordon, journo extraordinaire, humanitarian and friend. His books, including the beautiful 'Freeing Ali' will stand the test of time. A finely-tuned sense of justice, dedication to human rights and a wonderful intellect. My respects to his family.

■ NATASHA ROBINSON,  
ABC

Michael Gordon leaves behind a body of work that has shaped this country in ways we know, ways we know not yet, and ways we'll never know. One of the noblest travellers of all.

■ MICHAEL ROWLAND,  
ABC

This is so unfair. Michael was a truly wonderful man who radiated dignity and fairness.

■ SARAH RUBY

I don't know what to say about the terrible loss of Michael Gordon, except, that in times like these, we cannot be without him. My heart is with his friends and family, for whom those times are eternal.

■ PETER RYAN,  
ABC

Terribly sad news. Michael Gordon was a lovely man and a great journo.

■ LEIGH SALES,  
ABC 7.30

Such a lovely man. You'll be missed Mickey G x

■ CHLOE SALTAU,  
SPORTS EDITOR, THE AGE

"Micky was the most beautiful person you could ever hope to meet." And a quiet mentor so many at *The Age*. Sending love to his family.

■ DANIEL SANKEY,  
DIGITAL EDITOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN

As good a journo as Michael Gordon was ... he was an even better bloke. Vale Mick.

■ **MARK SCOTT**

Few more loved, admired and respected than Michael Gordon. For decades, the best of the best.

■ **JOCK SERONG, AUTHOR**

Ah, this is awful. Loved his journalism on asylum seekers and he did a wonderful book on Bells. Great writer.

■ **SHAMINDAN, FREEDOM FIGHTER**

I would like to share send my condolences to the family, friends, and peers of Michael Gordon. A true journalist, humanitarian and brother. Truth, empathy, courage and compassion made him one of the best investigative journalists of Australia.

■ **BEVAN SHIELDS, FAIRFAX CANBERRA BUREAU CHIEF**

We are heartbroken by the death this morning of our beautiful friend and colleague Michael Gordon

■ **BILL SHORTEN**

Mick was one of the good guys. A passion for truth-telling, a champion for social justice, his every word was wielded for a cause. I'll miss reading him and talking to him immensely. Love and condolences to his family.

■ **DAN SILKSTONE, JOURNALIST**

I keep reading these and it just makes me really sad. But what a mark to leave on the world – the overwhelming sense of your own unstinting decency. A rare legacy these days.

■ **JOHN SIMPSON**

Michael Gordon shone a light into the less visible corners of the human condition. He tried to give a voice to those without one. Always compassionate, always true to his craft. Fearless in seeking out all views and reporting them. A mentor to many. Kind and without ego.

■ **MELISSA SINGER, FAIRFAX JOURNALIST**

The world has lost a giant not only of journalism but also humanity. I adored this man. Our hearts are breaking.

■ **SENATOR ARTHUR SINODINOS**

Vale Michael Gordon, a master craftsman of great decency and character. Always found him friendly but penetrating in his questioning, a role model for fellow journalists. My sympathies to Robyn and family.

■ **GEOFF SLATTERY, FRIEND**

There will be Twitter in the next life, Micky. Just search for Michael Gordon & the wonderful words of friends, colleagues & old foes will make your heart burst with pride. I have never had a better friend & never will. We loved yr work but that was nothing like our love for you.

■ **DEBORAH SNOW, SMH JOURNALIST**

Too too soon to leave us Michael Gordon; revered in the Sydney and Melbourne newsrooms, a beacon for those who follow.

■ **DANIE SPRAGUE, PICTURE EDITOR, SUNDAY AGE**

Vale Micky Gordon a devastating day for all here @theage @theage\_photo Condolences to Robyn and family. A man with a golden heart and soul passed away this morning doing what he loved.

■ **CAMERON STEWART**

Truly heartbreaking news. One of the best journalists Australia has ever produced and the most wonderful bloke also.

■ **MARCUS STORM, PRESIDENT MEAA**

This is just terrible and sad. Huge loss for us all. My condolences to Michael's family and loved ones.

■ **CATHERINE STUBBERFIELD, SPOKESPERSON FOR UNHCR**

What a rare thing in this life to get to meet one of your heroes and discover they are even more wise, decent and kind than you could have imagined. Vale Michael Gordon. It was an honour to briefly know you.

■ **DUSKA SULICICH, EDITOR THE SUNDAY AGE**

Michael Gordon, our Age legend and one of the most beautiful men has died. We are utterly bereft.

■ **SUNSOI@073, REFUGEE**

I would like to share my depth empathies and condolences to the family and friends of Michael Gordon. He was a legend adventure the age's journalism and sincerely grateful human being and he was a voice of voiceless pple & symbol of humanity. Rip brother

■ **AMIR TAGHINIA, FORMER DETAINEE MANUS**

I was deeply shocked and saddened to hear the loss of our great journalist friend and supporter, Michael Gordon. My condolences to his family and friends.

■ **THE AGE SPORT**

Vale Michael Gordon. A brilliant journalist – generous and compassionate. Will be greatly missed.

■ **LAURA TINGLE, AFR JOURNALIST**

Such a shock. Vale gentle Micky Gordon. Celebrated and beloved Age journalist

■ **JEWEL TOPSFIELD, FAIRFAX JOURNALIST**

Michael Gordon taught me you didn't have to be a mongrel to be a good journalist. The importance of kindness, of barracking for the underdog, of speaking your truth. He was on the side of the angels and I can't believe he is gone.

■ **JOSEPHINE TOVEY, JOURNALIST**

What an enormous loss. Michael's principled, humane journalism on Indigneous affairs and asylum seekers was so important. Hopefully it will inspire a new generation of Australian journalists.

■ **MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER**

Farewell Michael Gordon. One of the most wise and calm of journalists. A good friend and great mentor to so many. He left us far too soon. Love and sympathy to Robyn and his family at this tough time.

■ **MAX UECHTRITZ, ABC**

Stunned. Giant of our industry so many of us have admired from afar. Devastating loss for his family, friends and the craft of journalism.

■ **SONYA VOUMARD, AUTHOR**

Feeling sad as this news sinks in. Michael Gordon's gentle face in the photos says it all. Always unassuming, always brave.

■ **TONY WALKER,  
JOURNALIST**

Well we remember Age Canberra bureau circa 1978-79 Grattan, Davidson, Broadbent, Gordon, Balderstone, McCarthy, Thomas, Saluzinsky... RIP Michael died doing something you loved – in the surf

■ **WALKLEY FOUNDATION**

The Walkley staff and board offer our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Age journalist Michael Gordon. Michael won the 2017 Walkley Award for Outstanding Contribution to Journalism.

■ **ROY WARD,  
JOURNALIST, THE AGE**

Michael Gordon gave Australian journalism so much yet still had so much to give, we have lost him far too soon.

■ **TIM WATTS, MP**

Horrible, horrible news about Michael Gordon. So very sad.

■ **RICHARD WILLINGHAM,  
ABC NEWS**

No words can do justice to just how great a bloke and journalist Michael Gordon was. A mentor and a mate. Vale Mickey.

■ **TONY WILSON,  
WRITER**

Stunned and devastated to hear the news about @mgordon\_fairfax A gentle man in every sense, but also fiercely driven and one of the legendary journalists of our time. All of us Wilsons are shedding tears today. The next chapter awaited, and this is too soon. So sad today.

■ **TONY WINDSOR,  
FORMER MP**

Michael Gordon was an example to anyone interested in politics, policy and fairness with a zest for the facts rather than the sensational, a true journalist ...my sympathy to his family and his colleagues .

■ **SENATOR PENNY WONG**

Michael Gordon was one of the finest journalists I knew. Thoughtful, compassionate and decent. And a humble, lovely man. My deepest sympathies to his family and friends. Such a loss for all.

■ **YOTHU YINDI  
FOUNDATION**

It is with deep sadness we extend our sincere condolences to the family of #MichaelGordon. What a consummate professional he is. A gentleman and an honor to have him reporting from our neck of the woods in NE Arnhem Land.

