

BOYCOTT OVER SPONSORSHIP 'DANGEROUS'

# Oakes plea: leave journo awards alone

EXCLUSIVE

STEPHEN RICE  
NSW EDITOR

The call to boycott the Walkley Awards because of the event's links to petroleum company Ampol has been branded as "dangerous" by legendary political correspondent Laurie Oakes.

"Journalism in Australia is already in trouble in terms of losing public trust and this is likely to make that worse," Oakes said.

"We shouldn't undermine something as important as the Walkley Awards. They have done a lot to encourage good journalism, important journalism, and they shouldn't just be pulled down.

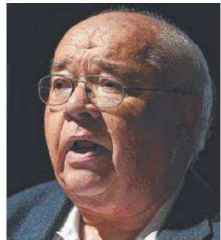
"There may be bad companies that shouldn't be given a leg-up by a journalistic organisation, but there's got to be a process, a proper argument, and it should be done without white-anting the premier journalism awards in the country."

Oakes said he was "very, very proud" of the Walkleys he had won.

The controversy began after a group of cartoonists called for a boycott because Ampol is a platinum sponsor of the awards, to be held on November 23.

Sydney Morning Herald and Age cartoonist Cathy Wilcox and Canberra Times cartoonist David Pope wrote to the Walkley Foundation last week, raising their concerns about Ampol's sponsorship.

"The fossil fuel industry uses its sponsorship of our sporting teams and cultural events to build a social license and distract attention from its role in heating the planet and



Oakes

delaying the transition to renewable energy," the letter said.

Among those to withdraw their Walkley entries were Fiona Katauskas, David Blumenstein and Glen Le Lievre, with Matt Golding, David Rowe and First Dog on The Moon also declaring they would not enter.

The Walkley Foundation also issued an apology at the weekend for "racist views" held by the event's founder, New Zealand-born oil baron, Sir William Gaston Walkley, that were published in a column he wrote in the Herald 62 years ago and did not align with its "ethical organisation".

Walkley claimed in the 1961 article that Australia could "cease to become a white man's country".

On X, formerly known as Twitter, journalist and editor Nick Feik, previously of The Monthly, declared the boycott movement had become "an avalanche".

However, Oakes, for decades the doyen of the Canberra press gallery and the winner of multiple Walkleys, questioned what other awards would have to be handed back on the same basis, pointing to the Archibald art prize.

"That was founded by and named after a bloke who ran a magazine (The Bulletin) with the

words under the masthead: 'Australia for the white man'. So do all the Archibald winners troop into the Art Gallery of NSW and hand back their prize? It just gets silly."

Mr Oakes also pointed to the Pulitzer Prize, founded by Joseph Pulitzer, one of the New York publishers who built empires based on sensationalist journalism.

"He and William Randolph Hearst invented yellow journalism, something that people are now appalled by, but we don't say Pulitzer's name should be taken off the award," he said.

Oakes said there were no "greenwashing" advantages to a company like Ampol using sponsorship to brush up their reputation. "Who knows who the sponsors are? There's nothing in it for them. And I can tell you that the judges are certainly not influenced by the sponsor," he said.

"There have been Walkleys awarded for climate change articles and no indication at all that the results have been affected."

Broadcaster Neil Mitchell also weighed into the controversy on Monday, slamming the cartoonists and supporting cartoonist Mark Knight, from the Herald Sun, who has described the move as "virtue signalling".

"I've got a Walkley Award for radio journalism. I'm very proud of it, and I'm annoyed by any suggestion I should give it back because Ampol is a sponsor and because the man who founded the Walkleys is being cancelled," Mitchell said.

"Journalists are confusing their roles too often with being activists rather than observers and commentators."

## Father's legacy, nature's wonder keep Olsen in the picture



ROB TENNENT

Louise Olsen says her father John, below, was encouraging and supportive toward her work

ALISON VENESS

Louise Olsen's third solo exhibition at her brother's Sydney gallery coincides with a period of grief after the loss of her father John earlier this year.

Speaking from the studio they shared in the Southern Highlands, Olsen – painter and Dinosaur Designs co-founder – is in a good place on the eve of her opening at Olsen Gallery in Sydney this month.

Of the loss of her artistic luminary father, Olsen tells Vogue "it is still too soon".

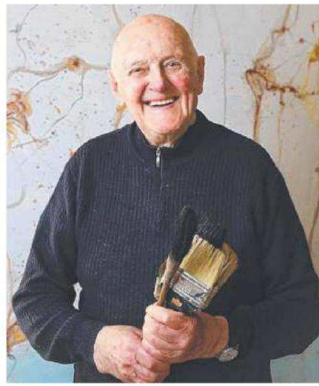
"Oh my god," she begins, "he is everywhere in the patina of the rooms, the books, the lit fire, the chair at the head of the table ... a way of life.

"I loved that at the end of a day working, he would come in on his walking frame and the smile on his face and the joy and the light-up of him coming into my studio and being excited about my painting.

He'd say, 'Oh my god!', and it was wonderful. We had grown up with a lifetime of watching him paint, and for him to realise me as a painter was a full circle for both of us."

Manifestations is the apt title of the exhibition that Olsen says is inspired by nature, something that lies at the core of her work.

And nature is all around, here in her studio at Hidden Lake, the Southern Highlands home she shared with her father for seven years. Inspiration is everywhere,



Rather, she said, military veteran Brennan Smith visited Dr Al Muderis and various GPs for the proper removal of the granulation tissue but "decided it was so easy he should just start doing it himself".

"He happily does it himself at home, but that's not how it was presented in the broadcast."

Former paratrooper Mark Urquhart told 60 Minutes he found maggots on his surgical wounds after an osseointegration procedure in 2016, but was ignored by Dr Al Muderis. "I sent the video to Munjed straight away and I never got a response from him," Mr Urquhart told the broadcast.

Painting has always been Olsen's centre. "I've been in the

from the eucalyptus trees to the still water from which the property takes its name.

Fifteen canvases of differing scale will be exhibited at her brother Tim Olsen's gallery this month. The process has been an organic one spanning the past 18 months, as "one idea leads to another idea".

During this time, she lost her father, who died at home in April at the age of 95. However, he is still very much present. One of his signature paintings, a symphony in oranges and reds, runs the length of the studio wall.

Manifestations presents both the bold and the sensitive. Canvases explode with linear branches or spidery webs, and crack with gum nuts. "The orchestra of nature," is what she calls it.

"There is something so abstract when you look around at things very quickly, you're seeing the world in an abstract way ... a blur."

Painting has always been Olsen's centre. "I've been in the

design and fashion worlds, but my essence is this," she says. "I come from an intensely creative family, both my parents were artists and when I was young, I felt I had to find my own voice. (That voice became Dinosaur Designs, which was launched in 1985.)

"Dad was part of everything – he was ruthless – and I'm so pleased I had that scrutiny, no holds barred as to what he felt about what I was doing.

"He was incredibly encouraging and supportive, but he could be brutal at the same time. I'd think, 'What the hell? What am I doing?', but it was great that push and pull and dialogue.

"There is a beautiful Paul Klee quote, it's about taking a line for a walk. When I paint it's like picking up that thread and it keeps going, it's never-ending. I love that idea. The line is the life force."

Louise Olsen Manifestations is on display until September 23 at Olsen Gallery, Sydney.

## 'Smack' tape link in Tyrrell case

STEVE ZEMEK

William Tyrrell's foster mother has pleaded guilty to assaulting a child but will fight allegations that she intimidated that child.

The 58-year-old woman fronted Parramatta Local Court on Monday with William's foster father as they prepared to fight charges that emerged after police placed listening devices in their home as a part of the investigation into the boy's disappearance.

She entered guilty pleas to two counts of common assault relating to a child who is not William and who cannot be identified for legal reasons.

One of the counts relates to the woman kicking the child in the thigh, the court heard.

However, she pleaded not guilty to two counts of intimidation and will defend the charges. The foster father, 56, has pleaded not guilty to one count of common assault and one count of intimidation.

The court heard that prosecutors were seeking to introduce several tapes into evidence in an attempt to prove a pattern of behaviour, one of which depicts a "smack, smack, smack" sound.

William was three when he vanished from his foster grandmother's house at Kendall on the NSW mid-north coast on September 12, 2014.

The case attracted national attention and has become one of the state's most notable cold cases. No one has been charged over the disappearance and suspected death, and his foster parents have continued to deny any wrongdoing.

The court heard one of the pieces of evidence, which police prosecutor John Marsh was seeking to tender, concerned a recording from the family home in which the smacking sound could be heard.

However, the prosecution did concede that there was no evidence it depicted a child being struck and the noise could have been made by an object striking a wall or object.

The court heard that there was tension within the house after the couple took on another foster child and the alleged victim thought she was being excluded and ignored.

The foster mother said she would speak with someone about "in effect ending the child's custody with her", defence barrister John Stratton SC told the court.

Magistrate Susan McIntyre on Monday said she would allow the tendency evidence to be tendered during the hearing. "I would really categorise the material relied upon in relation to (the foster mother's) conduct as threats and warnings as to what will happen in relation to continuing behaviours," Ms McIntyre said.

The hearing will resume on Tuesday.

The foster parents are also set to plead guilty to downgraded charges after they had another person place dummy bids at the auction of their Sydney home in December 2020, which eventually sold for \$4.1m.

The matter was mentioned briefly in court on Monday. Both previously pleaded not guilty to one count of dishonestly obtaining a financial advantage by deception. The court earlier this year heard the fraud charges were to be withdrawn and would be replaced by regulatory charges, which they would plead guilty to.

They will instead be charged with procuring a third party to make dummy bids.

The court heard on Monday that these charges will be dealt with at a later date.

NCA NEWSWIRE

## Two teens killed in Father's Day collision

FERGUS ELLIS

Two teenagers who died in a horrific accident involving motorbikes late on Father's Day have been remembered by their uncle as "beautiful kids".

Cousins Zena Houli, 18, and 17-year-old Ali El Houli are believed to have been riding separate motorbikes along Beatty's Road in Grangefields outside a family member's home in Melbourne's west when disaster struck.

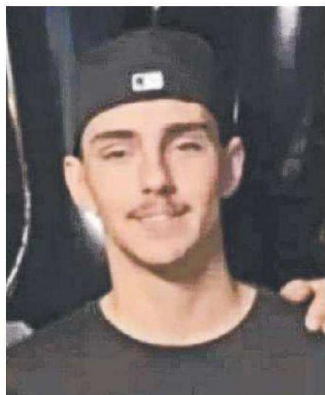
Zena was confirmed dead at the scene and Ali was transported by family members to Sunshine Hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries early on Monday morning.

Omar El Houli, uncle to both Zena and Ali, shared the moment he drove to the crash site and saw the body of his niece and his injured nephew just after 6.30pm on Sunday.

"We were driving down (the road) and we got out. My niece



Cousins Zena Houli, 18, and 17-year-old Ali El Houli



was on the floor dead and my nephew was also on the ground," Mr Houli told the Herald Sun.

"I wanted to see who they were, it was my farm. I saw the motorbikes, I saw them, they were on the ground. I couldn't imagine anything worse than what happened," he said.

It is understood Zena's father, 43-year-old Ali Houli, was on a

quad bike at the time of the incident and raced to check on his daughter when he crashed into an 80km/h zone sign along the sealed road and was also seriously injured as a result.

A five-year-old and an 11-year-old child were also injured as a result of the collision and were eventually taken to Royal Melbourne Children's Hospital.

It is believed around 50 family and friends were celebrating at a property close to the scene.

Mr Houli said Zena and Ali were both "beautiful kids with beautiful parents" and they would be in heaven "looking down on us now".

Major Collision Investigation Unit Detective Senior Sergeant Paul Lineham said the time of night and the fact unlicensed drivers were using unregistered vehicles was a "recipe for disaster".

In the wake of the tragedy, Sergeant Lineham said drivers on roads should "look after each other" as we head into summer.

"The issue we now have is as we get towards summer, as it gets hotter, we are going to see more motorcyclists out on the road," he said.

"We have had 24 motorbike fatalities this year so far. We know that historically at this time of year we are going to have more and more motorbikes out on the road."

## Famed surgeon claims 'terrible, terrible lies'

JOANNA PANAGOPOULOS

Lawyers for a renowned orthopaedic surgeon claim an amputee who cut off an overgrowth of connective tissue with a kitchen knife after surgery didn't do so because he was in such incredible pain or "feeling so abandoned" post-op, as suggested in a 60 Minutes broadcast, but because he wanted a cheap and easy solution.

Munjed Al Muderis, an expert in osseointegration – a surgical procedure to place a prosthetic implant into the bone – is suing the Nine Network in the Federal Court over a 60 Minutes episode and articles in the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age late last year. He says the journalists defamed him when they painted him as a negligent surgeon who used high-pressure sales tactics to the detriment of his clients.

Nine is running a public-interest defence.

Leading defamation lawyer

Sue Chrysanthou SC used the opening day of the hearing to lay out the falsehoods she claimed were made in Nine's reporting.

"The patient in the broadcast who (they) said took a knife to granulation tissue: the way it's presented is as though he sat there one day ... grabbed a kitchen knife and cut himself. (That's a) total lie," Ms Chrysanthou said.

Rather, she said, military veteran Brennan Smith visited Dr Al Muderis and various GPs for the proper removal of the granulation tissue but "decided it was so easy he should just start doing it himself".

"He happily does it himself at home, but that's not how it was presented in the broadcast."

Former paratrooper Mark Urquhart told 60 Minutes he found maggots on his surgical wounds after an osseointegration procedure in 2016, but was ignored by Dr Al Muderis. "I sent the video to Munjed straight away and I never got a response from him," Mr Urquhart told the broadcast.

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SUE CHRYSANTHOU SC

But Ms Chrysanthou said he sent the video to Dr Al Muderis in December 2020, six weeks after he filmed it and received a response from the practice straight away. She said this was "unsurprising" because he had maggots one other time about 18 months earlier and was given a protocol on how to clean it.

More than three years after his surgery, Mr Urquhart sent a letter to Dr Al Muderis, the court heard, where he thanked him in the strongest terms. Ms Chrysanthou said the fact that journalist Charlotte Grieve was given a copy of

## VC hero 'tried to conceal the truth'

LAUREN FERRI

Lawyers for Nine Newspapers say Ben Roberts-Smith caused his multimillion-dollar defamation trial to be "grossly prolonged", as it was directed towards "concealing the truth".

The allegation by the lawyer for Nine Newspapers was made as the battle over the estimated \$25m legal bill from Mr Roberts-Smith's failed defamation case rolls on.

The decorated former soldier sued The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age and The Canberra Times over a series of articles published in 2018 that accused him of war crimes.

In June, Federal Court judge Anthony Besanko dismissed the proceedings after finding the six articles proved – on the balance of probabilities – the most serious imputations.

After a marathon trial, it has been estimated that the legal bill for both sides will top \$25m.

Mr Roberts-Smith's lawyers told the court in June that the former soldier had agreed to pay the costs of the failed case on an indemnity basis from March 17, 2020, and argued he shouldn't pay indemnity costs before this date.

Indemnity costs are ordered when the court considers one party should pay almost all the expenses of the proceedings because of the way the trial was conducted.

Nicholas Owens SC, representing Nine, on Monday told the court that Mr Roberts-Smith should pay the costs from August 2018 when he first sued.

He said Mr Roberts-Smith had caused the proceedings to be "grossly prolonged" and were a "classic definition of an abuse of process".

"The applicant didn't simply sit back and say 'well, you prove these very serious allegations', he gave a positive account himself," Mr Owens said.

"He defended over a week of cross-examination, he called multiple witnesses over a period of almost two months (and) cross-examined our witnesses over a period of some months."

He said the soldier and his witnesses portrayed a "deliberate pattern of conduct ... to both conceal relevant evidence and to propound false evidence".

Mr Owens made reference to Justice Besanko's judgment, which found Mr Roberts-Smith and multiple witnesses told "various lies" to the court.

"(They) are specific instances of improper and unreasonable conduct of the litigation by the applicant and they provide their own basis for an indemnity costs order," Mr Owens said.

Arthur Moses SC, representing Mr Roberts-Smith, argued the "onus" of providing the defence lay with the newspapers.

He said Mr Roberts-Smith should have to pay full costs only if he prolonged the case with "groundless contentions".

Mr Moses called into question the presumption of innocence, telling Justice Besanko the newspapers "persisted in running articles" where his client was portrayed as a war criminal.

Justice Besanko reserved his decision on whether the court would make an indemnity order.

Mr Roberts-Smith is appealing Justice Besanko's decision.

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