

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **ACM CELEBRATES THE IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL JOURNALISM WITH WALKLEY AWARD - REPORTER REUNITES HOMELESS VETERAN AFTER 30 YEARS**

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2024 - Newcastle Herald reporter Matthew Kelly has been awarded a prestigious Walkley Award for his powerful series of stories that helped reunite a homeless man with his family after 30 years of living on the streets of Newcastle.

Matthew's reporting won the Walkley Award for the *Community and Regional Affairs* category, which was presented at the 2024 Walkley Awards ceremony held in Sydney last night.

The stories, which followed the life of Alwyn Craig – known to many in Newcastle as "Pete" – were both deeply compassionate and meticulously detailed. Matthew's investigative work revealed that "Pete" was in fact Alwyn Melville Craig, a Vietnam War veteran who had been lost to his family for decades.

Matthew's reporting, which first uncovered Mr. Craig's true identity in December 2023, led to a remarkable turn of events. A relative in Florida, upon reading the story, reached out, and earlier this year, Mr. Craig was joyously reunited with his brothers and other family members. In addition to his family, Matthew also spoke to Mr. Craig's former comrades from the Vietnam War, who remembered him as a blond-haired private from Wollongong nicknamed "Shorty."

The Walkley judges praised Matthew's series, describing it as "joyous and moving." They noted that Matthew's reporting "was both nuanced and thought-provoking, reminding readers that homelessness is a complex issue, while celebrating his community's generous embrace of a vulnerable man."

Newcastle Herald editor Lisa Allan said, "Matthew's story embodies the very essence of journalism—shining a light on the unseen and giving a voice to the voiceless. Through his investigation, quiet empathy, and compassion, he not only told Alwyn Craig's story but helped transform his life. Bringing a Vietnam veteran from the streets to safety and reuniting him with his family is a powerful reminder of the impact that regional journalism can have, changing lives, restoring dignity, and reconnecting families."

ACM Editorial Director, and former Newcastle Herald editor, Rod Quinn praised the work, "I remember Alwyn Craig well. He was a familiar face in inner-city Newcastle, but too often overlooked. Matthew was one of the few people who cared enough to listen and dig deeper. This award is a well-deserved recognition of Matthew's dedication to giving a voice to those who are too often ignored."

Matthew's Walkley Award win highlights the significant role of regional journalism in addressing important social issues in the communities outside of the capital cities - offering a compelling reminder of how investigative reporting can bring about real and lasting change.



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ACM is Australia's largest independent media company collectively reaching 2.4 million\* in print and over 3.6 million` online each month. The ACM network comprises close to 100 brands, including leading regional news mastheads the Newcastle Herald, The Canberra Times, Illawarra Mercury, The Examiner, The Border Mail and The Courier. The Agricultural division, ACM Agri, reaches 78%\*` of Australian farmers each month with a national footprint of agricultural specialist brands (The Land and Queensland Country Life), marketplaces (Farmbuy and Ag Trader) and events (Agquip and Farmfest).

We are passionate about keeping our communities strong, informed and connected. ConnectNow with ACM.

Source: \*Roy Morgan Single Source, Jul 23 - Jun 24, P14+. `IPSOS IRIS September 2024, Audience (Unique Audience). \*\*McNair Yellow Squares QARS, 2023-24.

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