



JUDGING GUIDANCE

1. Appointment of Judges

Wherever possible, judging panels should reflect the diversity of the Australian community.

Judging panels shall contain journalists from a mix of media organisations and independent practitioners.

Judging panels should be comprised of at least one journalist of at least five (5) years' standing in the craft.

Individual judges cannot adjudicate on award entries where a conflict of interest is evident.

Judges must disclose any conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest in all circumstances.

2. Guidance for Judges

Prior to commencing judging, confirm that you have read and understood the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) [Journalist Code of Ethics](#).

All award entrants (or lead entrants) shall complete the **Entry Questionnaire** as part of the entry process - [see the questions here](#).

Entries should honestly reflect the available facts.

Entries should not portray negative stereotypes and 'differences' in a way that conveys that all members of a particular community share a negative characteristic.

Entries shall display an appreciation and observance of relevant cultural protocols and use acceptable descriptors of communities and individuals canvassed in the subject matter.

Entries shall display an appreciation of diversity and an awareness that communities, especially marginalised communities, are not homogenous and that disparate views and beliefs are held across the subject-matter's spectrum.

Judges will have regard to:

- How the story was initiated and followed (with particular credit given for instigating or finding a story).
- Compliance with the [MEAA Journalist Code of Ethics](#) – see below.
- Newsworthiness, including exclusivity.
- Public impact or benefit, including audience engagement and serving specific communities.
- Consideration of the resources available.
- Creativity.
- Research and investigation.
- Whether artificial intelligence (AI) was used and the degree of AI use.
- Consideration of production pressures or deadlines and time constraints.
- Demonstration of best use of the format/s in which the work was published or broadcast
- Excellence in written or verbal communication and/or technical and production skill.
- Balance and accuracy

In relation to compliance with the [MEAA Journalist Code of Ethics](#), judges should give particular consideration to the entry's adherence to the following six clauses.

Clause 1. *Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts. Do not suppress relevant available facts, or give distorting emphasis. Do your utmost to give a fair opportunity for reply.*

Clause 2. *Do not place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationships, religious belief, or physical or intellectual disability.*

Clause 4. *Do not allow personal interest, or any belief, commitment, payment, gift or benefit, to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence.*

Clause 5. *Disclose conflicts of interest that affect, or could be seen to affect, the accuracy, fairness or independence of your journalism. Do not improperly use a journalistic position for personal gain.*

Clause 8. *Use fair, responsible and honest means to obtain material. Identify yourself and your employer before obtaining any interview for publication or broadcast. Never exploit a person's vulnerability or ignorance of media practice.*

Clause 11. *Respect private grief and personal privacy. Journalists have the right to resist compulsion to intrude.*

3. Legal and Other Challenges

Where an entry is the subject of a legal or other formal complaint, judges may use their best endeavours to comprehend the nature and plausibility of a complaint. The mere presence of a complaint is not a basis to remove an entry from award(s) consideration.

Failure to disclose the existence of a complaint by an entrant may be grounds for exclusion from consideration for an award or later revocation.

Judges have the right to reject an entry that, in their opinion, does not comply with the terms and conditions of the awards and/or in their reasonable opinion misrepresents an essential element of subject matter. The judges' decision will be final.