

THE MATTER OF FACTS

WITH HAMISH MACDONALD



ABC
COMMERCIAL
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a smartphone mounted on a black tripod. The phone is held horizontally. On its back, there is a white security inspection sticker with a blue circular logo and the text "EOD, PSC INSPECTED 240604". The background shows a person's face and a crowd, suggesting a public event or protest.

TAKE A THRILLING RIDE INTO THE HOSTILE FRONTLINES OF OUR GLOBAL INFORMATION WARS

Trolls, bots, Chatbots, misinformation, disinformation and 'enshittification' of online information.

If you don't know what any of this means, put on your flak jacket and join reformed war correspondent Hamish Macdonald as he embarks on a thrilling ride into the hostile frontlines of our global information wars. He meets leading experts from around the world to discover what happens if we lose our faith in facts and what we can do about it.

We are all navigating a digital ecosystem where truth and lies can be indistinguishable, and where information is created – at scale – to change what we believe, how we behave and who we vote for. Too many of us are reporting that we don't believe anything – or anyone.

At a moment when trust in truth itself is fracturing under the pressure of algorithmic manipulation, AI-generated realities and globalised disinformation, *The Matter of Facts* is an urgent, must-watch investigation into how our shared sense of reality is being rewritten – and what's at stake if we fail to fight for it.

The series journeys across the United States, the United Kingdom, Poland, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines and throughout Australia, bringing viewers face-to-face with some of the world's most insightful and compelling voices on the frontlines of the global information war.

FACTUAL
3 X 60'

NORTHERN PICTURES IN ASSOCIATION WITH MEDIA OCEAN
FORMAT AVAILABLE

EPISODES

EPISODE 1

How Big Tech is Making Fools of Us

Are you being fooled by disinformation? This episode will help you answer that question as its band of participants, experts, nerds and disruptors demonstrate what's happening to our brains, and belief systems, courtesy of tech giants and their digital ecosystems.

EPISODE 2

Disinformation Versus Democracy

Disinformation campaigns prove shockingly innovative in this investigation of digital deception on the international stage – from Paris to Poland, to the Philippines. We see how, when truth is under attack, democracy is weakened.

EPISODE 3

The Truth According to AI

A real time information revolution is now playing out as AI expands its capacity and purpose.

Almost all of us are now engaging with AI, whether we know it or not.

Hamish investigates where this march, into a largely unregulated AI future, might land us.

TEREN WOJSKOWY
WSTĘP WZBRONIONY

MILITARY AREA
KEEP OUT NO ENTRY

MILITÄRZONE EINTRITT
VERBOTEN

KEY PARTICIPANTS

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND



DR AMY DAWEL & DR ERYN NEWMAN

Cognitive Psychologists | Australia & New Zealand

Amy & Eryn are cognitive psychologists based at ANU who contributed to the design of our social experiments. The pair also worked with our participants on screen, delivering a range of experiments over three days. Amy has concentrated her research around our ability to distinguish between real and AI generated faces. She uses psychological theory to help us understand face perception and the implications of AI generated images on our interactions and broader psychology. Eryn explores 'truthiness' and the mistakes we make in memory and belief. Her work in cognitive bias has landed her in the territory of mis and disinformation, especially our propensity to bolster false beliefs even when these beliefs are demonstrably incorrect.

LIZZIE O'SHEA

Lawyer and Digital Rights Advocate | Melbourne, Australia

Lizzie O'Shea is an Australian lawyer, author, and digital rights advocate who founded Digital Rights Watch, a nonprofit organization dedicated to defending civil liberties and human rights in the digital age. As a technology and human rights lawyer, she has led cases prosecuting government surveillance, data privacy, algorithmic accountability, and the power of tech companies. Digital Rights Watch works to ensure that technology serves the public interest rather than undermining democratic values and individual freedoms. Lizzie is also a popular broadcaster and author of 'Future Histories: What Ada Lovelace, Tom Paine and the Paris Commune Can Teach Us About Digital Technology'.



UNITED KINGDOM



BEN STRICK

Centre for Information Resilience | London, UK

Ben Strick is a London based Australian digital investigator. As Director of Investigations at the Centre for Information Resilience, he's leading online investigators using open-source intelligence to expose human rights and war violations. Among their many investigations the team has exposed bombings in Myanmar, violence in Sudan, targeting of Sikhs outside of India and a network of fake MAGA supporters with thousands of followers.

KEY PARTICIPANTS

UNITED STATES



TRISTAN HARRIS

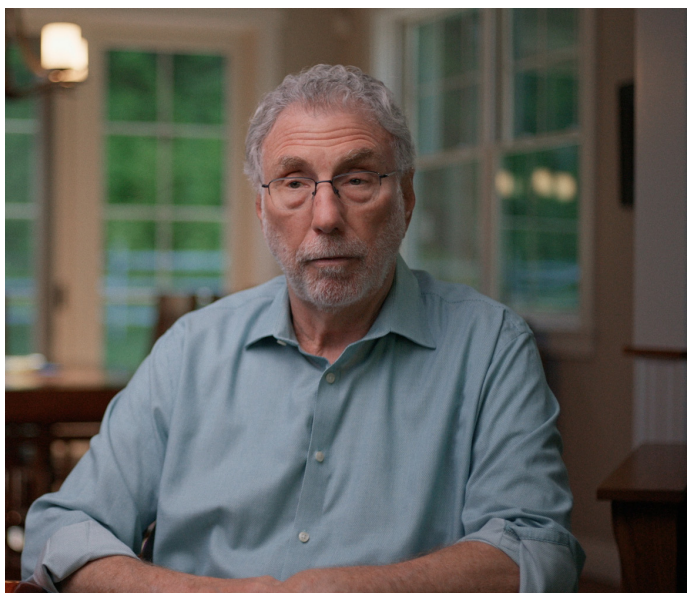
Technology Ethicist | San Francisco, US

Tristan Harris is a technology ethicist who is now among the most prominent voices warning of the societal harms unregulated social media, and now AI. While at Google, he worked on reducing digital distractions and wrote an internal presentation called “A Call to Minimize Distraction & Respect Users’ Attention,” which went viral within the company. After leaving Google, he co-founded the Centre for Humane Technology in 2018, a nonprofit organization dedicated to realigning technology with humanity’s best interests. He advocates for fundamental reforms to technology design, including changes to business models that profit from engagement, stronger regulation of tech platforms, and the development of humane technology that serves human well-being rather than exploiting psychological vulnerabilities.

MARYANNE WOLF

Professor-In-Residence, School of Education and Information Studies, UCLA | Los Angeles, US

Maryanne is a scholar, teacher and advocate for literacy around the world. She is currently Professor-In-Residence at UCLA Education and Information Studies but teaches and talks broadly on the ‘reading brain’ in a digital world. She believes we are losing the capacity for ‘deep reading’, which has implications for critical thinking and empathy.



MARTY BARON

Journalist and Editor | Massachusetts, US

Before joining The Washington Post in 2013, Marty Baron spent over a decade as editor of The Boston Globe. He oversaw the Globe’s groundbreaking investigation into the Catholic Church sexual abuse scandal, (inspiring the film “Spotlight”). At the Post under his leadership, the newsroom grew from 580 to almost 1,000 journalists – despite it being a challenging period for print journalism. He navigated the publication’s transition to digital news and new ownership under Jeff Bezos. He is known as an outspoken advocate of the value of a free press and has received numerous accolades for his leadership, including the 2019 ICFJ Founders Award for Excellence in Journalism.

KEY PARTICIPANTS

ASIA



MARIA RESSA

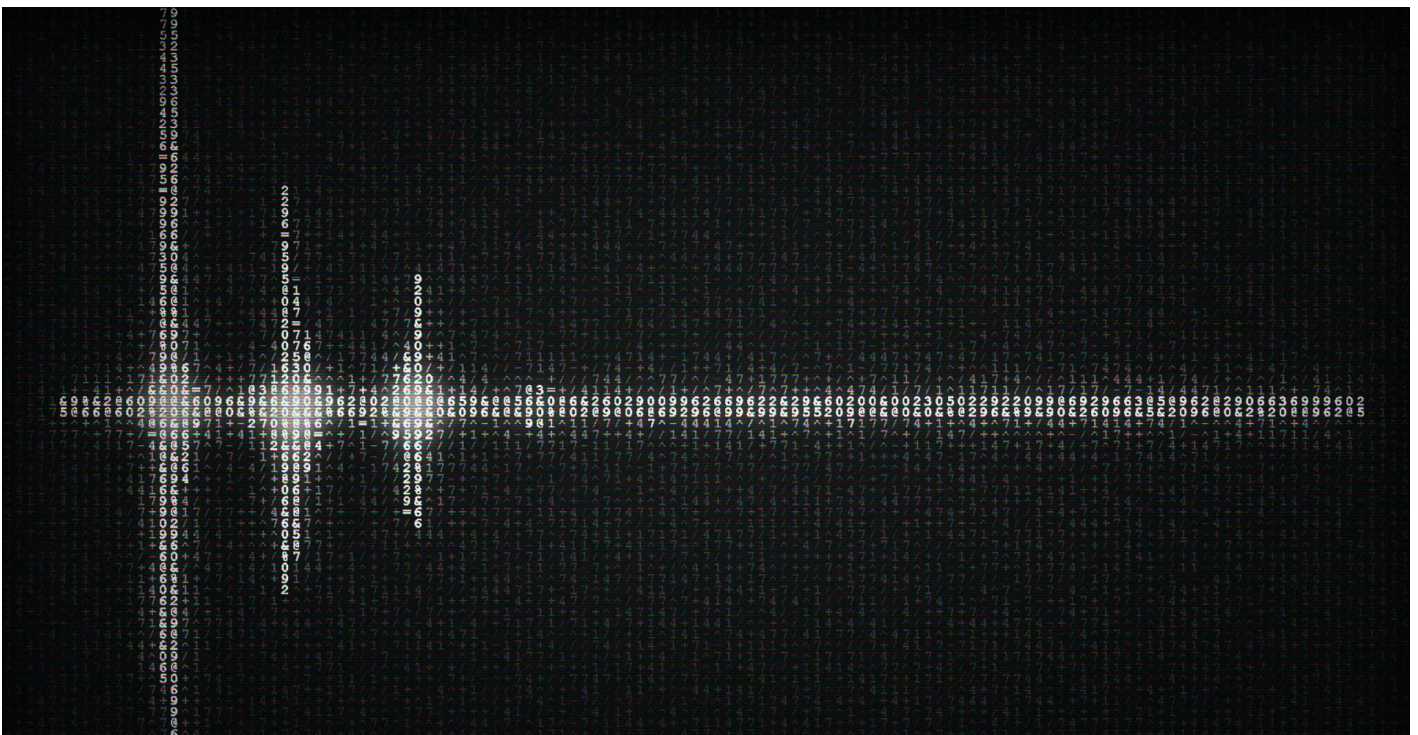
Journalist and Nobel Prize Winner | Manila, Philippines

Maria Ressa is a Filipino American journalist and the co-founder of Rappler, an independent online news organisation based in Manila. Rappler is known for its investigative reporting and critical coverage of former President Rodrigo Duterte's administration. Ressa spent almost 20 years as CNN's lead investigative reporter in Southeast Asia before establishing Rappler in 2012. In 2021 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her safeguarding freedom of expression. She works tirelessly to expose disinformation and defend the role of independent journalism in democratic societies.

AUDREY TANG

Taiwanese Cyber Ambassador (at large) | Taipei, Taiwan

Audrey was a software programmer and civic hacker before her skills were recognised by the Taiwanese Government and she was appointed one of the world's first Ministers of Digital Affairs. She has done pioneering work in open-source software development and digital democracy. As Taiwan's first transgender government minister, Tang championed radical transparency, participatory governance and innovative digital tools enabling civil engagement in Taiwanese policy making.





MEDIA

‘Five stars - excellent and vital three-part exposé’

– **Sydney Morning Herald**

‘At this juncture in world history, deep dives like this have never felt more important’

– **The Guardian**

‘Orwell’s world is no longer far from our reality. Award-winning journalist Hamish Macdonald wades into the fray in this compelling three-part documentary’

– **The Spectator**

‘5 Stars - essential three-part series on the spread of disinformation’

– **The Sun-Herald**

‘Best shows streaming this week’

– **Screenhub**

KEY CREATIVES

TOSCA LOOBY

Series Director, Writer and Producer

Tosca is a creative director, writer and producer of factual programming and has written and directed a cross section of Northern Pictures' most acclaimed and awarded output, including: *The Jury: Death on the Staircase* (SBS), *Asking For It* (SBS), *See What You Made Me Do* (SBS) and nationwide blue-chip natural history series, *Magical Land of Oz* (ABC, BBC & PBS).

Tosca also made the feature documentary *Strong Female Lead* (SBS) which charts the besieged leadership of Australia's one and only female PM.

Tosca's work has won and been nominated for awards in Australia and internationally including: Rose D'Or Best Documentary, Content Innovation Awards Best Series, AIDC Best Documentary; AACTA Best Director, Walkley shortlisted best documentaries, New York Festival TV & Films Awards Best Documentary, ADG Best Director; Sydney Film Festival Best Feature Documentary; Walkley's June Andrews Award for Women's Leadership in Media.





KEY CREATIVES

HAMISH MACDONALD

Presenter, Script Editor and Co-Producer

Hamish Macdonald is an award-winning journalist who has covered wars, disasters, and major world events.

He is host of ABC Radio Sydney's Mornings and co-host of *Global Roaming* on ABC Radio National. Hamish has won numerous awards including – a Walkley for current affairs journalism in 2005, the EU-Qantas Journalism Prize and the Elizabeth O'Neill Journalism Award in 2024. *Global Roaming* was named Best News Podcast by Radio Today.

He was also previously named Young Journalist of the Year by Britain's Royal Television Society. Hamish has covered conflicts in Afghanistan, Libya and Ukraine, the nuclear disaster in Japan, uprisings in Hong Kong and Egypt, the London bombings and the rise of ISIS in Iraq.

Overseas, he has worked for Channel 4 News in the UK, Al Jazeera English, and America's ABC where he was International Affairs Correspondent.

In 2016, Hamish became a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University and is Patron of the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation and Ambassador for Dementia Australia.

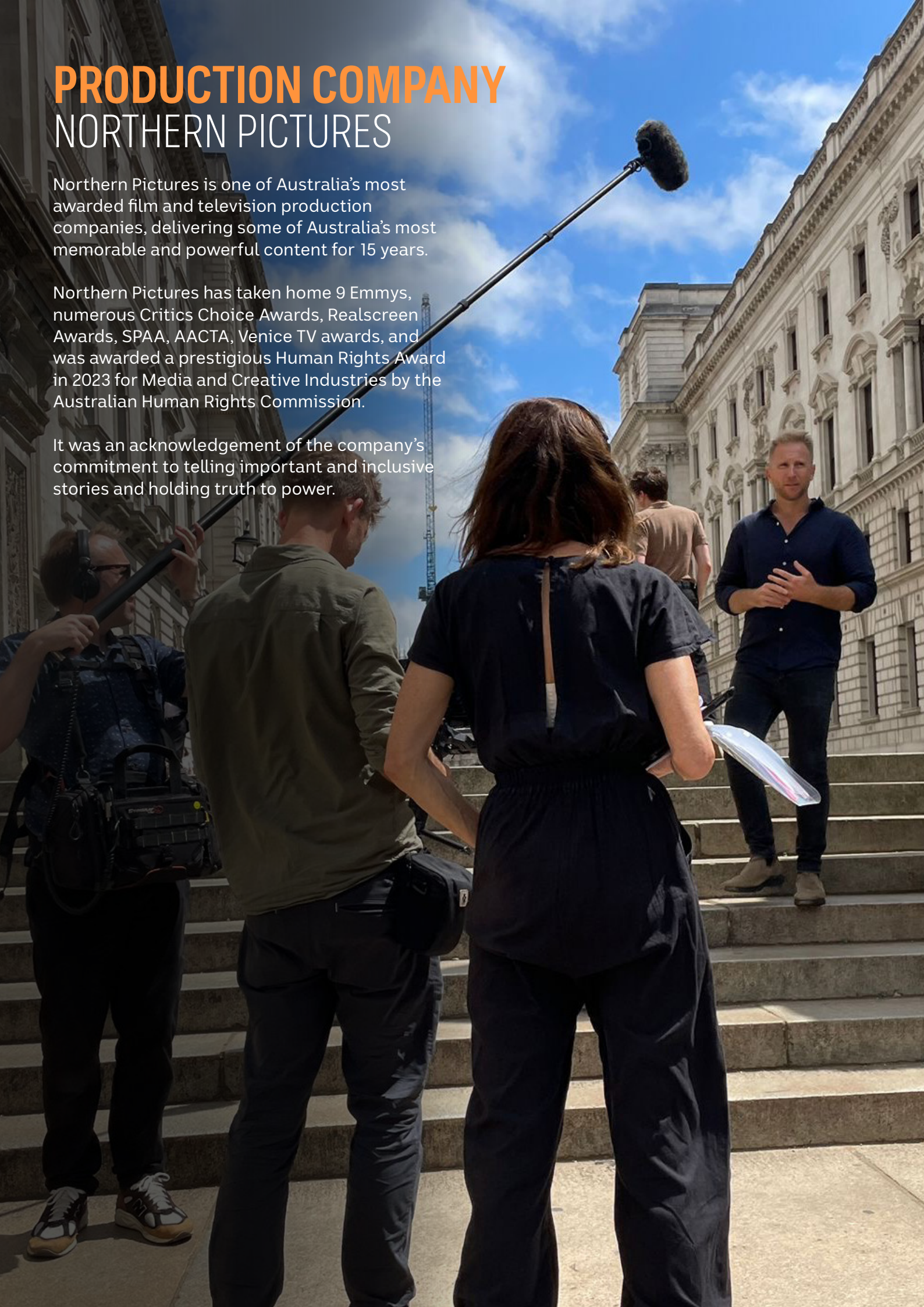
PRODUCTION COMPANY

NORTHERN PICTURES

Northern Pictures is one of Australia's most awarded film and television production companies, delivering some of Australia's most memorable and powerful content for 15 years.

Northern Pictures has taken home 9 Emmys, numerous Critics Choice Awards, Realscreen Awards, SPAA, AACTA, Venice TV awards, and was awarded a prestigious Human Rights Award in 2023 for Media and Creative Industries by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

It was an acknowledgement of the company's commitment to telling important and inclusive stories and holding truth to power.



GLOSSARY

AI-GENERATED: Content (text, images, video, audio) created by artificial intelligence systems rather than humans - often using machine learning models.

BOTS: Automated software programs that perform repetitive tasks online, including posting content, liking posts, or amplifying messages on social media—often without disclosing they're not human.

DISINFORMATION: False or misleading information deliberately created and spread to deceive or manipulate people.

HYBRID WARFARE: A combination of conventional warfare with unconventional methods such as cyberattacks, propaganda and political subversion to destabilise governments and populations.

MISINFORMATION: False or inaccurate information shared without intent to deceive. The person spreading it believes it's true.

TROLLS: People who deliberately post provocative, offensive, or disruptive content online to upset others, derail conversations, or get reactions.



KEY LOGICAL FALLACIES EXPLOITED TO CREATE MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

AD HOMINEM

An argument directed at a person rather than an idea.

“Most scientists who criticize climate change have financial ties to fossil fuel companies.”

FALSE DILEMMA

Presenting only two options when more exist.

“Either you support this policy completely, or you don’t care about public safety.”

SLIPPERY SLOPE

Claiming that one step will inevitably lead to extreme consequences without evidence.

“If we allow this regulation, soon the government will control every aspect of our lives.”

APPEAL TO EMOTION

Manipulating emotions rather than using logic. Often uses fear, anger, or sympathy to bypass rational thinking.

“Think of the children! We must ban sex education to protect innocent minds.”

CHERRY PICKING

Selecting only evidence that supports your position.

“Crime rates have skyrocketed in cities that defunded police departments.”

HASTY GENERALISATION

Drawing broad conclusions from limited examples.

“My neighbour got sick after her immunisation. Vaccines are dangerous.”

APPEAL TO AUTHORITY

Citing an authority figure outside their area of expertise, or inventing false credentials to lend credibility to false claims.

“My physiotherapist says I need time off work for my mental health.”

BANDWAGON (APPEAL TO POPULARITY)

Arguing something is true because many people believe it.

“Everyone knows that female drivers have dodgy reflexes compared to male drivers”

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