

# Judges announced for FCJ Excellence Awards 2017

The Forum of Community Journalists (FCJ) has announced the names of the judges for the FCJ Excellence Awards 2017.



Top (l-r): Virginia Keppler, Dinesh Balliah, Joe Thloloe. Middle (l-r): Henry Jeffreys, Dr Thalyta Swanepoel, Cornia Pretorius. Bottom (l-r): Izak Minnaar, Johann (Jabu) de Jager, Fanie Groenewald.

The judges who'll have the difficult task of selecting the writing category winners are: Joe Thloloe (chairperson of the judging panel), Fanie Groenewald (convener of judges), Dr Thalyta Swanepoel, Henry Jeffreys, Johann de Jager, Virginia Keppler and Cornia Pretorius.

The digital journalist category will be judged by industry experts Izak Minnaar and Dinesh Balliah.

## The judges

- **Joe Thloloe**, chairperson of the panel of judges, recently retired as executive director of the Press Council of South

Africa. Before that, he was the press ombudsman for five years. Thloloe has been in the media industry for more than 50 years, starting in 1961 on the *World* newspaper. He has been honoured with an iKhamanga in Silver Award by President Jacob Zuma. He received the Nat Nakasa Award for courage and integrity in journalism from the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef), Print and Digital Media South Africa and the Nieman Society of South Africa. Thloloe has contributed extensively to journalism training and the development of the media industry in South Africa. He is currently a member of the panel of adjudicators of the Press Council of South Africa..

- **Fanie Groenewald**, convenor of the judges, an ex-journalist at *Beeld* and a former teacher, was a lecturer in the department of journalism, Tshwane University of Technology from 1995 until his retirement in June 2012. He is an experienced adjudicator of press competitions, inter alia the Oscar Frewin Awards of the Middelburg/eMalahleni Caxton group, the Caxton Awards, the LIN Awards of independent community newspapers in Limpopo and the MDDA/Sanlam Local Media Awards. He is a member of the panel of adjudicators of the Press Council of South Africa.
- **Dr Thalyta Swanepoel** is a senior lecturer and the convenor: journalism subject group at the North-West University (NWU), Potchefstroom campus, where she specialises in journalism and media relations in the classroom and provides study supervision to several MA and Honours students. From 2009 to 2015 she served at Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais, Illinois as director of the journalism programme. She has authored/co-authored chapters in two textbooks, several articles in national and international academic journals, read papers at conferences in South Africa and abroad, participated on research panels and conducted guest lectures, workshops and training sessions in a variety of settings.
- **Henry Jeffreys** is a former (and the first black) editor-in-chief of the Cape Town-based Afrikaans daily *Die Burger* (2006-2009) and the founding editor-in-chief of *The New Age* (2010-2011). Jeffreys started his journalism career at the Johannesburg-based Afrikaans daily *Beeld* in the 1980s, but left journalism in 1986. He returned to journalism in 1999 as deputy editor and political editor of *Beeld*. He was awarded the Nieman Fellowship in 2004 and attended Harvard University. He served as both deputy chairperson (two respective terms) and chairperson of the South African National Editor's Forum. He currently works as a freelance journalist, public commentator and strategist.
- **Johann (Jabu) de Jager** is a retired professor of journalism. He started lecturing in practical journalism in January 1973 at the Potchefstroom campus of the North-West University and worked at the university for 12 years. While in Potchefstroom, he was the part-time news and sub-editor of the *Herald* newspapers. In January 1986, he was appointed the head of publicity at the HSRC. From May 1988, he worked for Volkskas Bank and then the Absa Group until his retirement in December 2008. Since then, he has lectured in corporate communication at the NWU Mafikeng campus and in journalism at the Tshwane University of Technology.
- **Virginia Keppler** is the Pretoria bureau chief of *The Citizen*. She started her career in journalism at the *Vrye Weekblad*, and has since worked at *Beeld*, *Pretoria News*, *City Press*, *Rapport* and *Sondag*. Before her current position, she was news editor at *Beeld* in Pretoria. Over the years Keppler has received several awards for her in-depth reporting. In her spare time, she runs a mobile library. She has published a book of poems and short stories.
- **Cornia Pretorius** is a journalism lecturer at North-West University (NWU). She has worked as a journalist and researcher as well as a commentator, consultant, content developer, editor, writer and project manager in the field of education. As a reporter, she worked for the *Beeld*, *Sunday Times*, *ThisDay* and *Mail & Guardian*. Pretorius has won local and international awards for education reporting, including the African Education Journalist of the Year Award (English category) presented by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). She also spent six months at Oxford University in Britain as a fellow of the international news agency Reuters. She has written a book, published in December 2017, on the NWU's merger entitled *Forging Unity: The story of North-West University's first 10 years*.
- **Izak Minnaar** is an editor, journalist and editorial manager, specialising in digital media and journalism training. He is currently editor of digital news at the South African Broadcasting Corporation. He previously worked in print media as

the chief sub and deputy news editor and was in charge of the SABC's TV news magazine programmes (including *Good Morning South Africa* on SABC2) in the early '90s. He is a member of the South African National Editor's Forum (Sanef), the IABSA Publisher Council and the Press Council of South Africa.

- **Dinesh Balliah** is a lecturer in the department of journalism at Wits University in the area of new and social media. She is also deputy public advocate on the South African Press Council. She is also engaged in research towards a PhD in journalism, with a focus on newsroom convergence and the impact on journalism practice in South Africa. Her specialities include online media research, policy making, marketing and publicity; media history and general South African media law; new media history and law. Contemporary debates in new media law and policy-making are a particular interest.

The awards ceremony will be held in Gauteng on 29 June. For enquiries about the FCJ send an email to [myfcjinfo@gmail.com](mailto:myfcjinfo@gmail.com) or call Ben Burger on 021 841 4288.

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