

BREAKING THE NEWS

MEDIA RELEASE

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**Documentary *Breaking the News* from Mutiny Media,
Canberra premiere, Fri 24 August 2012
Copland Theatre, The Australian National University, ACT**

The Canberra premiere of ***Breaking the News*** coincides with the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's announcement that '*Timor Leste (East Timor) does not need UN peacekeeping operations at this time.*' This will open the way for hundreds of international troops to depart Timor Leste around December 2012. Documentary *Breaking the News* covers the period from the May 2006 crisis and raises serious questions around its inadequate resolution.

In August 2011 Wikileaks released 390 US embassy cables from East Timor. Director Nicholas Hansen said '*These cables document the shifting story of a key local character, which ABC Four Corners relied on for their game-changing coverage of the 2006 conflict. Calls for greater transparency and accountability from elected officials and our media must extend to the manner in which Australian journalists report politically-sensitive foreign conflicts,*' said the film's director'.

Filmed over four years in East Timor, Australia's most-misunderstood neighbour, Director Nicholas Hansen brings us a cautionary tale about journalism in an age of spin and spectacle.

On 11 February 2008, East Timor's President Horta was shot and Prime Minister Gusmao's convoy attacked in a double assassination attempt and suspected coup. ***Breaking the News*** includes an exclusive interview with the President's guard who claims he killed the President's attackers.

In 2010, two years after the President's near-fatal shooting and a lengthy trial, just one thing is still missing: the truth. The trial overturned the official version of events and then five months later the President pardoned his jailed attackers. These conflicting narratives are just some of the epic challenges facing local journalists in East Timor.

Thirteen years after East Timor successfully voted for independence from Indonesia, ***Breaking the News*** gets behind the scenes of news and current affairs reportage to challenge those who think a free press automatically comes with independence. Jose Belo and Rosa Garcia are two local journalists enmeshed in the political turmoil of their country, who regularly put themselves and their families at risk by reporting ongoing corruption and injustice.

Breaking the News follows Jose's journey from resistance fighter during the Indonesian occupation filming combat with the guerrillas to the director of the most successful newspaper in East Timor. In 2008, after his newspaper turns whistleblower and publishes a series of investigative articles that implicate the Minister for Justice in corruption, the minister brings criminal defamation charges against Jose to silence the newspaper. Concerned his source material will be destroyed Jose protects it by publishing it to Wikileaks. During the 2006 crisis Rosa had just given birth to her second child. When her newspaper was forced to close after two of her colleagues were badly beaten, Rosa found work with ABC-TV Four Corners crew.

The Fretilin government was struggling with the threat of civil war when Four Corners met 'Railos', a former resistance fighter who led a secret security group. The ABC filmed a mock gun battle headed by Railos, which implicated the government's Interior Minister, Rogerio Lobato, in the arming of civilian militia. Recent revelations in US cables released on 30th August 2011 support the line of inquiry in **Breaking the News**. Commander Railos is quoted as telling U.S. embassy officials before Four Corners filmed that the group had already, '*...taken the weapons to the President and relayed the story.*' This raises the question why a secret security group, which had changed sides and was now protected by President Xanana Gusmao, was rearmed and back in public putting on a firing display for the Australian media?

Four Corners 'Stoking the Fires' broadcast a series of allegations which helped bring down Mari Alkatiri as leader of the East Timorese government. **Breaking the News** returns to analyse these events through the eyes of East Timorese journalists and discovers a range of irregularities in Australian media reports.

'The film brings into sharp focus the conflicting demands of democracy, ethical reporting and the production of news media, highlighting the difference between the news we witness in our lounge rooms every night and the plight of struggling journalists in the young nations of our region,' said the film's director, Nicholas Hansen.

At the heart of this documentary is a fascinating ambiguity. As we watch the news being deconstructed, we are also attracted by the spectacle, complicit in its production; we all want 'a good story'. **Breaking The News** exposes both the challenges facing foreign journalists in producing the news spectacle and the situation for local journalists under political pressure.

Canberra Premiere, Friday 24th August 2012 at 6.30pm
Copland Theatre, The Australian National University, ACT

Further information, interviews with the director, preview DVDs and hi-res images contact:
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Trailer and website

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Press Kit: www.breakingthenews.com.au/docs/Breaking_the_News-Press-Kit.pdf

Produced and directed by Nicholas Hansen, in association with Screen Australia, Mutiny Media and Film Art Media. Developed with the assistance of Film Victoria.
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