

The Kennedy Foundation

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Media Release

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KENNEDY FOUNDATION CONDEMNS SPYING ON JOURNALISTS

The Kennedy Foundation has slammed the NSW Government over the “suspect” surveillance of foundation trustee and respected investigative journalist Steve Barrett.

The NSW Parliament Upper House inquiry into the police bugging scandal has revealed Mr Barrett’s name was placed on 52 listening device warrants, approved by the Supreme Court.

Steve Barrett is a founding director of the Kennedy Foundation, and has played a key role in the organisation of the annual Kennedy Awards for Excellence in Journalism since their inception in 2012.

A leading reporter with *The Daily Mirror* and *Sydney Sun*, he went on to set new standards in crime reporting as a senior journalist with the *Seven* and *Nine* networks.

He has also worked as a senior producer on *60 Minutes* and *A Current Affair*.

His dedication to shoe-leather, contact-driven journalism embodies the spirit of the Kennedy Foundation, and the essence of Les Kennedy’s legacy as a leading proponent of the same values.

The Foundation also supports Kennedy Awards senior judge and respected investigative journalist Neil Mercer in his continued efforts to expose potential wrong-doings in the use of listening device and telephone intercept warrants.

Foundation chairman Peter Ryan says the unacceptable and possibly criminal intrusion into the privacy of a senior journalist defies the fundamental principles of press freedom in a western democratic society.

“The revelations of the upper house inquiry provide a damning indictment of successive governments in allowing press freedom to be compromised in such a gratuitous, insidious way,” Mr Ryan said.

“In the very least, the extent of this unjustified surveillance demands a public apology to Mr Barrett, and an honest admission of the extent to which his innocent media colleagues have been subjected to similar covert surveillance.

“The Kennedy Foundation has called on the Baird Government and various agencies with the powers to stage covert surveillance to declare the truth on the number of journalists illegally recorded in the course of their journalistic duty.

“Steve Barrett has championed the plight of many illegal bugging victims since this scandal’s genesis more than 15 years ago, and has the Kennedy Foundation’s complete support in demanding repercussions from the findings of the upper house inquiry and Ombudsman’s investigation.”

Mr Ryan said journalists should be allowed to pursue the truth without the fear of vindictive and vexatious vendettas waged by those trusted with the responsible administration of law and order.

“Anything less evokes sinister memories of the most ruthless regimes in the former eastern bloc,” Mr Ryan said.

**Inquiries Kennedy Foundation General Manager Steve Warnock 0424 407 717
Kennedy Foundation Trustee Peter Kogoy: 0418 233 452**