



Accidental Celebrity Press Release



Ordinary Australians who survived extraordinary events reveal what it's like to be catapulted to prominence in *Accidental Celebrity*, a powerful new podcast launching 1 February.

The six-part series takes you inside the media industry's trade in trauma, featuring rare insights from Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton, James Scott, Stuart Diver, Bruce and Denise Morcombe, Todd Russell and Rosie Batty.

These once anonymous individuals, who became household names and familiar faces, join journalist and former media executive Fiona Reynolds, turning the spotlight around to expose the tricks of a competitive trade.

Each episode delves into the experiences of a media target, from the relentless pursuits to the price of fame, questioning why people participate in coverage and agree to paid exclusives. It's a behind-the-scenes look at the wrestle for control as private lives become public property.

"You'll seldom learn about the betrayals of truth and trust, the manipulation and the misrepresentation, unless journalists are reporting on the behaviour of a competitor," says Dr Reynolds, who created the podcast based on her PhD research into accidental celebrity.

She admits that hearing first-hand accounts from those who were caught in a feeding frenzy forced her to confront how she turned trauma into news and survivors into celebrities during a 30-year media career.

"Tales of tragedy are frankly good for business, feeding the public's fascination with adversity and the strength of the human spirit," she explains.

"The accidental celebrities I spoke with are fully aware that they've been used for ratings, sales and online engagement. They've grown media savvy, speak authoritatively and without a hint of self-pity."

Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton – whose baby daughter Azaria was taken by a dingo in 1980 – believes the public demands stories about suffering so it shares responsibility. She and Thredbo landslide survivor **Stuart Diver** make no apologies for hiring a media agent and accepting money in exchange for interviews. Along with **Todd Russell**, who was rescued from the collapsed Beaconsfield mine, they argue that controlling the hounding hordes was the main consideration. Lost Himalayan hiker and now psychiatrist **James Scott** believes few people have the resources and resilience to resist repeated requests to speak. **Bruce and Denise Morcombe**, as well as **Rosie Batty**, stepped into the spotlight to seek public support for a cause. They're thankful to the media for giving them a voice, although they now have to be conscious of how strangers may perceive them.

Accidental Celebrity will be released weekly from 1 February through Acast, Apple, Spotify, Amazon or wherever you get your podcasts.



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RELEASE SCHEDULE

1 February 2021

The Dingo Baby - Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton

Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton became recognisable to millions of Australians after a dingo took her precious baby Azaria in 1980. The young mother found her privacy invaded and portrayal twisted as her story and identity became commodities to the media.

“I don’t mind taking money because they (media) have made so much more out of me than I ever could. They’ve probably made more out of me in a day than I’ve made altogether. And they’ve taken away my right to a livelihood by making me so well-known that I can’t get a job and I’ve had to do something.”

- Lindy

8 February 2021

The Iceman - James Scott

James Scott was rescued in 1992 after 43 days alone, without food, in the freezing Himalayan mountains. The medical student defied all expectations of what a human could endure, only to face media speculation about whether he’d staged a hoax.

“It was really sad that for a while there I thought that I wish I hadn’t been found, I wish I’d died up in that mountain so I didn’t have to come back and face all these problems. It’s terrible that someone can get to the point where they wish they were dead as a result of what is being reported in the media.”

- James

15 February 2021

The Sole Survivor - Stuart Diver



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Stuart Diver was emotionally shattered, physically weak, and vulnerable to demands from a media pack when he was pulled from the rubble of the Thredbo landslide in 1997. The ski instructor relied on professional help to protect his personal interests.

“If you break your leg you don’t go down to the local Mitre 10 and buy some plaster and just plaster it up yourself. You go to a doctor and you get it x-rayed etc. I always go from that you should surround yourself with the best professionals you can in that time. So whether the professional is a psychologist, whether they’re an accountant or whether they’re a media manager, you should always try and surround yourself with the absolute best possible people you can.”

- Stuart

22 February 2021

The Missing Schoolboy - Bruce and Denise Morcombe

Bruce and Denise Morcombe would do anything to get their 13-year-old son Daniel back after he disappeared in 2003, including sacrificing their privacy to appeal for public help. The couple learnt how the media operates, to secure ongoing coverage.

“I don’t think there’s any doubt, if Daniel’s body had been found on day two, for argument’s sake, we wouldn’t have done any media at all. The only reason for doing that was to appeal for information. One hundred per cent.”

- Bruce

“I suppose if we hadn’t interacted with the media the publicity wouldn’t have gone out that far and I don’t know whether Daniel’s case would have been solved.”

- Denise

1 March 2021

The Great Escape - Todd Russell

Todd Russell was stripped of his anonymity before he’d even emerged after 14 days trapped underground by the 2006 Beaconsfield mine rockfall. Elation was quickly replaced by frustration as the media pursuit and public attention became overwhelming.

“There’s just no privacy, you know, you had them camping across the road, you had them camping up on the hill with them big telescopic lenses ... taking photos – just trying to get an exclusive photo so they had something to put in the paper. I thought that was quite rude.”



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- Todd

8 March 2021

The Face of Family Violence - Rosie Batty

Rosie Batty let the media into her life when her ex-partner killed their 11-year-old son Luke in 2014. She chose to turn a personal tragedy into a catalyst for change, learning to play the game to galvanise support for a national campaign against family violence.

“The challenge is that it’s hard to be anonymous, except I don’t expect people to know who I am. So, I’m just navigating this way forward, still being surprised people know who I am.”

- Rosie