



FAIREST AND BEST

SPORTS PRESENTER ON ABC'S NEWS BREAKFAST, PAUL "PK" KENNEDY HAS A LOT MORE TO TALK ABOUT THAN FOOTBALL AND CRICKET, DISCOVERS MATT MYERS. PHOTOGRAPHY BY PIER CARTHEW.

DNA: You've been a news journalist for over 20 years. What has been your most significant career highlight to date?

Paul Kennedy: Definitely writing the book *Hell On The Way To Heaven*, with Chrissie Foster back in 2010. There's no doubt that's the most important piece of journalism that I've undertaken and I don't expect I'll do anything more important. The book was an effort to help Chrissie and Anthony Foster tell their story about child abuse in the Catholic Church. It put a spotlight on the way the Catholic Church covered up crimes and subjected people to abuse. It's about the injustices that the survivors went through over many years. Anthony and Christine's story was one of the reasons the Royal Commission announced its investigation and I'm very proud of being able to help.

What sparked your interest in that subject?

It goes back to 1996 when I was a cadet journo working for a newspaper in Oakleigh, Victoria. I covered a front-page story about a local paedophile priest who had been jailed, and the parents were struggling to find out who the victims were, and what the church was doing to help. I met Chrissie Foster then and about 12 years later I covered her daughter Emma's funeral for Channel Nine news. I stayed in contact with them, and I stayed with the story because I needed to, and the Fosters needed me to. I've become an advocate for survivors and my aim is to help get justice for those people.

You directed a film called *Drug Game*. Can you explain what that was about?

I was a playing coach of a football team in Victoria and we had a lot of issues within our club, like other clubs, with drugs. So, we worked through that as a community and, at the end, the Melbourne International Film Festival was having a competition for football-based short films. One of my mates was a cameraman and we had a lot of footage from our efforts, so I made a short film and it played to a packed cinema in Melbourne.

When it comes to football, we still haven't seen an AFL player come out. What do you think is holding them back?

I've thought about this, and as someone that's not only covered the game as a journalist but also played and coached and been involved at

different levels for decades, it's astounding to me that no one has come out. I can't imagine a player would come up against too many challenges within a football club environment. I might be naïve, because I'm not in that position, but I think team mates and coaches these days would be so much more understanding. I think falling under the spotlight and the avalanche of media attention that a player would get is probably what's holding them back. But to not have an openly gay AFL player in 2017 seems so... outdated. However, I should say that there are many openly gay footballers in the AFLW, the women's league, and I don't think that's been an issue at all.

The ABC News Breakfast team seems to enjoy each other's company. Are you one big happy family?

Yes, we've got an unusual chemistry and mutual respect. We come together in the early morning and there's great empathy there with everyone getting up at the crack of dawn. With the production team, directors and make-up artists, we're a pretty good team and, it's a bit of a cliché, but we are like a family.

Is weather man Nate Byrne as cheeky as his smile suggests?

Nate Byrne is the same cheeky presenter off-camera as he is on. He's taken *News Breakfast* by storm with his enthusiasm and with that added element of science that he brings. He's been a great addition and is much valued. He's definitely very cheeky!

Are you aware that people think of you as a silver fox?

Not really. I don't read any comments online and I guess I see myself as someone who's over the hill these days. My dad was forever a silver fox so I knew I was going to go grey early!

Who is your music diva?

Whitney Houston. *The Bodyguard* was one of my favourite movies as a youngster, and it has the song *I'm Every Woman*. My wife always raises her eyebrows when I start singing that!

What song gets you onto the dance floor?

Footloose would be one but that's probably standard for everyone. But one song I defy anyone to not dance to or jump up and down to is *Come On Eileen* by Dexys Midnight Runners. I've seen how it gets everyone up at many different parties.

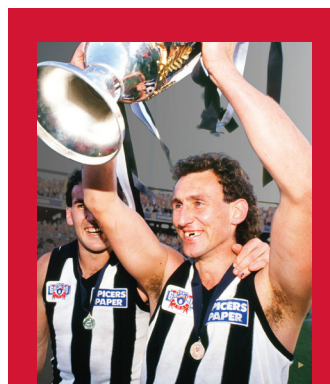
Are you a good dancer?

I'm a horrible dancer but if I can jump up and down to it, that'll do me!

You recently contributed to the book *Letters Of Love*. Can you tell us about that?

That was from the Alannah And Madeline Foundation, and I wanted to write a letter of love for my wife. I figured, in a stylistic way, it would be better if I wrote it to my three sons and one day they could read what their mum means to their dad. That's why I did it and, like other Aussie blokes, I don't often say what I should to my wife. We've been together for 19 years and I should have expressed myself before now. It was a nice way to do it and an honour to be in that book, which has

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DNA: IF YOU WERE GAY, WHO WOULD BE THE ONE FOR YOU?

PK: The man that I've most loved and adored, apart from family, is the great Collingwood [AFL] champion Peter Daicos. He's a bit older than me but I imagine that if I were to turn gay for him we'd sit on the couch, snuggle up, and watch highlights of him playing footy.

PK ON LGBTI EQUALITY:
"I'M A STRONG BELIEVER THAT MARRIAGE EQUALITY SHOULD BE AFFORDED TO EVERYONE."

a lot of expressions of love.

Apparently... you used to play footy with Karl Stefanovic?

Yeah, we played a couple of forgettable games of touch football up in Queensland. Karl was always a shooting star. When I went to Channel Ten he was recruited to Channel Nine and he's always someone I've admired. Different people view him in different ways but I see him as one of the country's best newsmen. When I left Channel Ten they made me a farewell video and from memory Karl was rubbing his nipples. That was Karl's farewell!

Thank you for your support of gay rights.

Well, I think it's important that we have fairness and equality in Australia. That's why I'm still a journalist. We need to strive for that. I believe that all people's views should be respected but I also think to deny LGBTI people their rights is wrong. Discrimination and intolerance should have no place in a country like ours.

Of all your interviews, who has made the most lasting impression on you?

As a sports journalist, I'd say Cathy Freeman. As I get older I don't have that many sporting heroes left, but Cathy Freeman is there. She's a fantastic person and a wonderful role model. It floors me that she was able to perform at her best under all that pressure at the Sydney Olympics. I'm in awe of her. Her composure under pressure is the greatest thing I've seen in Australian sport. I had the chance to interview her on Palm Island where she set up the Cathy Freeman Foundation and to see her in that environment helping kids was inspirational.

This is our entertainment issue. What TV shows are you into?

I love comedies like *The Office* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm* but I also love the old school shows like *Frasier*, *Cheers* and I'm pretty happy that *Will And Grace* is back. Recently I've been watching the new ABC comedy *Growing Up Gracefully*. I also watch old episodes of *Ray Donovan* and *Californication* but I have missed the *Game Of Thrones* boat!

Are you ever tempted to sit behind the news desk wearing just your briefs?

We have the studio couch and the most flamboyant thing I can do there is wear some brightly coloured socks. But if we only had the desk I'd wear the least amount of clothing acceptable in the newsroom. In the summer I'd wear boardshorts but probably not speedos! **So, for you, is it jocks, fitted boxers or free-balling?**

Jocks for me. I used to be more particular but over the last few years as I fall into middle age I'm happy with the Bonds six pack and I wear them until they get holes in them.

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