

Embargoed until Friday 23 June, 2017

EAVESDROPPERS OF THE WORLD UNITE – TALKFEST IS HERE

ABC RN and the Wheeler Centre launch Talkfest: a smart, passionate and entertaining co-production

From ABC RN and the Wheeler Centre, [Talkfest](#) invites you to take a front-row seat for some of Australia's most compelling moments in public conversation.

Talkfest presents an entertaining and thought provoking package of conversations that explore the ideas that underpin cultural debate in Australia, but from perspectives that can sometimes be overlooked. Traversing art, money, language, science and celebrity, *Talkfest* dives head-first into the stories that surround our daily obsessions, featuring a smart and passionate guest line-up with provocative and often surprising results. It's like the best dinner party with your smartest friends.

Wheeler Centre Director, Michael Williams invites a different co-host each week to unpack themes and ideas in ways we promise you've not heard before. The first episodes will prime you with discussions covering Sex, Words, Space, Heroes and Failure.

Michael Williams says, "I'm not sure if it's a peculiarly Australian concept to use the word '*Talkfest*' as a pejorative, but honestly: who can begrudge the idea of a festival of talk? We've spent years at the Wheeler Centre exploring the ways in which smart conversation is an artform, an entertainment and a crucial part of a strong society. By partnering with the national broadcaster and Australia's cultural home for smart talk, the Wheeler Centre can share our amazing conversations with a wider audience."

Talkfest reaffirms the ABC's commitment to delivering distinctive and high quality audio to audiences.

ABC RN Manager, **Deborah Leavitt** says, "We are delighted to announce the addition of *Talkfest* to both our linear and digital slates. Both RN and the Wheeler Centre are passionate about ideas and discussion. *Talkfest* is an example of RN working with another key cultural institution to make the most compelling local content available to more Australians. Furthermore, I'm excited about the opportunities *Talkfest* presents in creating engaging audience experiences, which speak to the diverse range of voices that reflects Australia in 2017."

Talkfest: We're all talk and none of it's small.

[Episode 1 of Talkfest is now available](#). Subscribe for weekly episodes on the [ABC Radio app](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), or wherever you get your favourite podcasts.

Talkfest can also be heard broadcast on [ABC RN](#) each Saturday at 10.00pm and repeated Sunday 4.00pm and Tuesday 1.00am.

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For more information, please contact:

Carlin Beattie, ABC Audiences

beattie.carlin@abc.net.au | +61 422 375 061 | +61 2 8333 2535

About Michael Williams

Michael Williams is the Director of the Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas in Melbourne. He has worked at the Wheeler Centre since inception in 2009, when he was hired as the Head of Programming before being appointed as Director in September 2011. For 2015-2016 he hosted *Blueprint for Living* on ABC RN, and he remains a regular guest on ABC radio and TV. Michael has also worked as a Breakfast presenter for Melbourne's 3RRR, as a member of the Australia Council's Literature Board and in publishing, and has written extensively for *The Guardian*, *The Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian* and elsewhere.