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Australian Story: The Big Dry

Airs Monday October 10 at 8pm on ABC & iview

"Holding it all together was becoming a really hard act. I ended up in hospital on a weekend and got my stomach pumped. Trying to pretend everything was normal was no longer sustainable." – TV newsreader, Talitha Cummins

"Television is this bright, shiny, fabulous facade. When you're a news presenter you put on a mask most of the time. Talitha fooled everyone." – Chris Bath, journalist

"Sometimes I'll just say, 'I'm an alcoholic thanks,' and see the reaction. That gets people!" – Talitha Cummins

Television newsreader Talitha Cummins describes herself as the modern face of alcoholism: young, professional, educated and high functioning.

Cummins, who gave birth to her first baby in August, is now four years sober and wants to share her story in all its confronting detail.

The Channel Seven journalist is also determined to break down stereotypes around alcoholism and promote more discussion about the extent of problem drinking in society.

"With alcoholism and recovery there is no finishing line," she says. "It's ongoing, recovery will be always and forever."

Cummins began binge drinking when she was 14. As soon as she had one drink it would unleash an 'unstoppable need' for more and more.

"I've done things that I'm not proud of and I've done things that I probably won't ever remember," she says.

"I went to the media awards in Brisbane all dressed up in a formal dress and proceeded to drink myself into oblivion. I was told I was carried into a car to be sent home."

When things came to a head a few years ago, Cummins was drinking up to four bottles of wine a night. She was fighting serious depression and had overdosed and been rescued by a friend.

When her boss at Channel Seven confronted her, Cummins finally found the strength to take action.

"The threat of losing her job made her sober up," says friend and fellow newsreader Chris Bath.

Cummins signed up for Alcoholics Anonymous and the online help site Hello Sunday Morning and embraced the long haul of recovery.

The journalist never intended to go public with her addiction. But when she accidentally published a private blog revealing she was an alcoholic, she was heartened by the response.

“Initially I was really shocked and wanted to delete it,” says Cummins. “But when I saw the responses I was amazed. People said my story was theirs as well. I got emails from people who were binge drinking, mothers who would start drinking in the afternoon, high profile people who were reformed alcoholics.”

“I think Talitha was very brave,” says friend and fellow journalist Chris Bath. “There were a few unkind comments, but the overwhelming reaction was that it was a really courageous thing for her to do.”

***Australian Story: The Big Dry* – airs Monday October 10 at 8pm on ABC & iview**

Talitha is available for interviews.

Join the conversation: **#AustralianStory**

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