

Herald man wins award

The *Herald* writer Paul McGeough has been honoured in one of the world's leading journalism award ceremonies.

He won third prize in the SAIS-Novartis International Journalism Awards, sponsored by Johns Hopkins University in the United States.

McGeough, a former editor of the *Herald* and now a senior writer based in New York, was recognised for articles written about life in Afghanistan under the Taliban and the desperate circumstances that drive Afghans to become victims of human-trafficking operations.

The judges chose McGeough's articles from a field of 170 entries because "these close-up, first-hand reports of people in despair are gripping and vivid".

"McGeough's reports vividly profile the appalling life of the Afghan people, the outrageous degradation of women, the atrocities of war and politics," the judges said.

The first-prize winner was a television documentary for Channel Four in Britain on the plight of Afghan women. Second prize was won by a *Washington Post* journalist, David Finkel, for a series on global migration.

McGeough is currently on assignment in the Middle East.

Sacked whistleblower gets university job back

Aban Contractor
Higher Education Writer

The sacked academic Ted Steele will get his job back at the University of Wollongong after the Federal Court ruled the university acted unlawfully when it dismissed him.

Dr Steele, sacked without warning a year ago after saying he had been told to upgrade students' marks, said he hoped the university would now deal with him fairly and let his allegations be tested in a public forum.

"Fair play would be that, if they're going to try me again, it has to be in a proper court of law where all the truth comes out," he said outside the court on Friday. "I've been through almost 14 months of hell, and I'm not going to go through a kangaroo court at the University of Wollongong."

In a unanimous ruling, the Federal Court rejected an appeal by the university that it had the right to summarily dismiss an academic. It was ordered to pay Dr Steele's costs, estimated to be



Revealed: the secret paths to higher education

"I've been through 14 months of hell" . . . a jubilant Ted Steele. Above, how the *Herald* broke the story.

about \$40,000. The vice-chancellor, Gerard Sutton, said he accepted the court's decision that he breached the university's enterprise bargaining agreement.

The university will negotiate with the National Tertiary Education Union, which brought the legal action on Dr Steele's behalf, to decide on a process for his reinstatement.

"We intend to reinstate him," Professor Sutton said. "That won't occur until there's an agreement on a process to address the substantial issue of the allegations and the merits of the dismissal."

Asked if he would allow an independent outsider to oversee any hearing, Professor Sutton said "yes".

He dismissed claims that he had damaged the university's reputation by summarily dismissing Dr Steele for speaking out on falling academic standards at the height of a national debate on the issue. Dr Steele was one of dozens of academics who contacted the *Herald* early last year with examples of "soft marking", but the only one who let his name be published.

Yesterday, students at the University of Wollongong called on Professor Sutton to resign.

The president of the post-graduate students' association, Dave Coffman, said Professor Sutton had lost the respect of many academics and senior administrators in higher education

because he had infringed a basic tenet of academic life: the right to speak out on issues of public importance.

Students should also consider the huge amount of taxpayers' money Professor Sutton had wasted in unnecessary legal bills.

"That could have been better spent on addressing the crisis in the provision of library journals or creating sorely needed scholarships," Mr Coffman said.

A spokeswoman for the union said Dr Steele had been without work and pay for more than a year. He had been pilloried by the university and he and his family had suffered as a result.

"We think that for the university to try and embark on another investigation of Dr Steele about the events that they've already sacked him for [is] not only double jeopardy - he's already been through a lot - but we would be concerned about bias," she said.

"How can Dr Steele get a fair hearing when the vice-chancellor has already determined that he should have been sacked?"