

## Losing a parent during the pandemic



Sarah Walker's photograph of her mother Julie appears on our June cover

Sarah Walker, in her powerful cover essay in the June-July issue of *Australian Book Review*, explores the aftermath of her mother's death at the start of the pandemic and the impact that Covid-19 had on her family's ability to commemorate and mourn her loss. Walker explores the ethical quandaries of trying to arrange a funeral during a pandemic as traditional expectations around grief and mourning collide with the need for social distancing and isolation.

In the essay Walker writes:

'The telephone becomes the nexus of everything, the object through which the intangible, messy world comes to us. Friends call. They pour out sympathy, lament the distances between us. Inevitably, the conversation turns to the fear bubbling up like water through earth. I sit, throat tightening, making attentive noises as people gasp about the rising death tolls, the government response. The virus fills every gap in conversation, expands like putty into the pauses.'

### About Sarah Walker

Sarah Walker, a Melbourne-based writer, photographer, and fine artist, is the current *ABR* Rising Star (Victoria). Her essay 'Floundering' was placed second in the 2019 Calibre Essay Prize and appeared in our June-July 2019 issue. She was a finalist in the 2019 international MTV RE:DEFINE Award, the winner of the 2016 Best Portrait Prize at the CCP Salon, a finalist in the National Photographic Portrait Prize, a two-time finalist in the Maggie Diaz Photography Prize for Women, and a semi-finalist in the Moran Photographic Portrait Prize. She is also an award-winning theatre designer and director and co-host of the podcast Contact Mic.



### Interviews

Sarah Walker is available for interview.

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