

**The Australian / By staff writers from NewsCore**  
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## **WikiLeaks founder given peace award**

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/breaking-news/wikileaks-founder-given-peace-award/story-fn3dxity-1226053733789>

WIKILEAKS founder and controversial figure Julian Assange was awarded the Sydney Peace Medal - an Australian peace and justice award - in London overnight.

The Sydney Peace Foundation said it was honouring Mr Assange with its gold medal "in recognition of the need for greater transparency and accountability of governments".

Stuart Rees, director of the foundation, heaped praise on his fellow Australian citizen.

"By challenging centuries old practices of government secrecy and by championing people's right to know, WikiLeaks and Julian Assange have created the potential for a new order in journalism and in the free flow of information," he said.

Mr Assange - who is currently in the UK fighting extradition to Sweden over sex crime allegations - attended the ceremony at the Frontline Club in central London.

According to The (London) Daily Telegraph, the former computer hacker suggested WikiLeaks played a "significant role" in the so-called Arab Spring by releasing thousands of US diplomatic cables late last year, which were eventually translated into Arabic and French.

In accepting his prize, Mr Assange said, "The real value of this award, and the Sydney Peace Foundation is that it makes explicit the link between peace and justice", according to The Telegraph.

"It does not take the safe feel good option of shunning controversy by uttering platitudes. Instead it goes into difficult terrain by identifying organisations and individuals who are directly engaged in struggles of one kind or another," he said.

"With WikiLeaks we are all engaged in a struggle, a generational struggle for a proposition that citizens have a right and a duty to scrutinise the state."

Mr Assange, 39, has sparked fierce controversy over the past year for publishing on his website hundreds of thousands of leaked confidential documents - including secret US diplomatic cables, reports about detainees held in Guantanamo Bay and papers on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.