



Judges Comments

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JOURNALISM

Best News Story Award *Sponsored by APS*

Tanya Gordon from APS presented these awards.

Judged by: Kristy Hess & Alison McAdam from Deakin University.

Circulation under 2,000

Overall Comments

The quality of journalism in this category was a highlight for the judges because each entry demonstrated just how well a small-town newspaper 'lives and breathes' its local community. The diversity of content, from stories of survival to successful artists and athletes, and even a ratepayer quarrel or two. The entries were a delight to read and there was barely a whisker separating the top four entries.

Winner: Numurkah Leader – Council to be dismissed. Journalist - Dominique Cosgriff.



This winning entry demonstrates the important role local media play in democracy, especially at a local government level. The newspaper showcased a package of stories that provides comprehensive coverage of a local council in turmoil. Anyone who argues local councils can adequately serve a community with their own ratepayer funded newsletters and website content should read this story first to remind them of the importance of independent public interest journalism.

Highly Commended: Tony Curran – The Horsham Times. It's not over yet.

Horsham Times "Wimmera in Flood" and Loddon Herald "24 hours of Bridgey Spirit" Two newspapers which provide an overview of the impact of flooding in regional communities. Well written articles and excellent page layout and photography.

Highly Commended: Chris Earl – Loddon Herald. 24 hours of Bridgey Spirit.

Horsham Times "Wimmera in Flood" and Loddon Herald "24 hours of Bridgey Spirit" Two newspapers which provide an overview of the impact of flooding in regional communities. Well written articles and excellent page layout and photography.

Commended: Brodie Everist – Alpine Observer. Council awaits investigations over contamination concerns.

The historic use of a site as a tobacco farm prompted contamination fears that were carefully explored and reported by the newspaper.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best News Story Award

Circulation 2,000 - 6,000

Overall Comments

This awards category attracted a variety of diverse and interesting news stories that showed the high standard of reporting in our regional and rural areas and reminds us just how important sustaining high-quality journalism is for the Australian democracy and the social fabric of communities. It was the human-interest stories in this category that outshone the field however.

Winner: Wangaratta Chronicle. Journalist – Simone Kerwin. Immy's Spirit Lives on.



Simone is the deserving winner of best news story for her excellent, thoughtful, and sensitive approach to human interest storytelling. Simone's story about the sad and sudden passing of six-year-old Imogen was an especially memorable and powerful story.

Highly Commended: Simone Kerwin – Wangaratta Chronicle. Groundbreaking Research offers hope.

Simone's article about a young mother's battle with brain cancer provided important insight from medical professionals and personal experiences.

Highly Commended: Kristy McDonald – Casterton News. Delivering 'Gussy's legacy'.

We highly commended the Casterton News for its powerful story about how two communities can come together and learn from tragedy. The writing is engaging and accessible, and the story highlights the importance of young men talking about depression and suicide.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best News Story Award

Circulation over 6,000

Overall Comments

This category attracted a long list of well-written reports on topics as varied as the plight of local asylum seekers to the pensioner who uses his vintage car to take the bins out. Quality journalism is about holding power to account, bringing people together in times of crisis, helping a community to understand itself.

Winner: North Central Review. Swamped – Flooding across Mitchell Shire.

Journalists – Lauren Duffy, Colin Mac Gillivray, Max Davies



The well-written reports covered multiple facets of the unfolding story, and design features such as photography, layout and headlines complemented the multi-page package.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Sports Story *Sponsored by Potent Web*

Lukas White from Potent Web presented these awards.

Judged by Greg Watson.

Circulation under 2,000

Overall Comments

The under 2000 circulation category was highlighted by the use of dynamic and engaging photographs, several including excellent front-page presentations. Overall, the quality of writing and the diverse story lines were great.

The importance of football clubs and junior sport in country communities was highlighted in an excellent series of articles over 6 months by Loddon Herald's Chris Earl.

The Mclvor Times' front pages on an aspiring gridiron player and a drought breaking trotting success were stand-outs, whilst an in-depth full-page interview on a retired champion cyclist provided great reading in the Yea Chronicle.

Winner: Loddon Herald. Journalist - Chris Earl – Football frustrations



Excellent coverage of the local football league's turmoil over the push by two clubs to switch leagues and the impact on the junior competitions. Full marks to Journalist Chris Earl, who pursued the frustrations and challenges to find solutions over a series of articles since December, culminating in two strong articles on the issues, impact, and possible solutions.

Highly Commended: Barbara Sungaila – Mclvor Times. World wide open for receiver.

Eye catching full front-page photograph led readers to an inspirational article about an 18-year-old Heathcote gridiron wide receiver being selected in the Victorian State team. Journalist Barbara Sungaila's interview-based article captured a great insight into the sport and the young star's commitment to playing in the senior competition, and his passion and ambitions to play in the USA.

Highly Commended: Barbara Sungaila – Mc Ivor Times. Young Driver on track for success.

A second excellent article and presentation by journalist Barbara Sungaila featured a very engaging full front-page photograph by Peter Weaving, which immediately captured readers' interest. And on page 3 they were led on Tayla French's journey to become Australasia Young Harness Driver Champion through Barbara Sungaila's great interview style in her article's presentation.

Best Sports Story - continued

Circulation under 2,000

Commended: Chris Earl – Loddon Herald. Queen of the Green.

A great “people piece” and very engaging article from Chris Earl which would have captured the attention of every reader. Captivating photograph and headline supported the story about three amazing ladies still playing and still winning on the bowling green, and who provided an insight into changes for women in sport, relaxation of dress codes and to sharing the rinks with men in competition.

Commended: Anne Richey The Yea Chronicle. Following a Peiper Dream to the Tour de France

A comprehensive article detailing the national career and life's highs and lows for former Yea cyclist Allan Peiper is based on an interview from his home in Belgium. Journalist Anne Richey has presented a very interesting timeline story from Allan Peiper's life in Yea and Alexandra to his professional cycling and eventual retirement.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Sports Story

Circulation 2,000 - 6,000

Overall Comments

A very interesting mix of stories highlighted the 2000-600 circulation category, with only a few sporting event reports amongst well-presented insights into individual performances and identities.

A decision to merge the two long established Maryborough football and netball clubs provided a unique opportunity for a timely – and award winning – major news story for Maryborough Advertiser.

Among the best were great people stories, funded challenges facing elite athletes and celebrations with world and national titles. Personalising stories with inclusion of great interviews always keeps readers engaged, even into the longest article.

Winner: The Maryborough District Advertiser. Journalist – Michael Thompson – Green Light



It was a once in lifetime sport story and the Advertiser and journalist Michael Thompson did it proud. The timely decision by the two local football netball Clubs to amalgamate for the 2024 season provided the Advertiser with a unique opportunity to cover the historic bonding of the clubs, which have been fierce rivals from either side of town with legacies dating as far back as the 1930s.

Highly Commended: Josh Huntly – Riverine Herald. Vince the man with the Midas touch

A great article reviewing the 50 year career of local identity Vince Jessen covering his travels from the heights of VFL to Echuca and rubbing shoulders with some of the game's greats along the way. Josh Huntly's great interview provided the Echuca Stalwart trainer's recollections of memorable playing seasons and opportunities, and the joy local Club successes.

Highly Commended: Hannah Kennelly – Mansfield Courier. Shooting funding in focus.

It's great to see country newspaper journalists delve into the major issues facing local sports stars and Hannah Kennelly's in-depth article on the financial challenges for Mansfield's Olympic gold medallist Catherine Skinner and her fellow national shooters did just that. Very well-presented interview comments from the local star, and also from Shooting Australia's CEO, provided balanced coverage of difficult funding issues facing our international competitors.

Best Sports Story - continued

Circulation 2,000 - 6,000

Commended: Michael Thompson – The Maryborough District Advertiser. Double Joy

A wonderful feel-good article by Michael Thompson highlighted the Mortlock family's emotional success in winning the central Victorian Pacing Championship. It recounted the involvement of four generations in the sport, the training challenges and the excitement and thrills of race day. The excellent family back page photograph captured the spirit of the success.

Commended: Michelle Brady – The Guardian – Swan Hill. Race Fires up the Fun.

In three articles with some action photographs spread over 2 pages, journalist Michelle Brady gave an insight into a local off-road racing club, the challenges of a 300km bush course, and some of the identities embedded in this challenging sport.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Sports Story

Circulation over 6,000

Overall Comments

The quality of entries, especially in the Over 6000 circulation category, presented a judging challenge, with some strong commentary and great interviews providing interesting stories which clearly engaged readers. In fact, only a few points separated the best and only 2 points separated 8 contenders for the Commended Awards.

Capturing the excitement, the key moments and drama in match reports, even those on enthralling grand finals, can be a real challenge. This year, it was the great interviews woven into match reports which stood out and competing match reports on the Romsey Redbacks cricket success just pipped four excellent finals reports included by group sports journalist Tara Murray in her impressive list of entries.

Almost half the entries were stories about individual sports people and three others were about community involvement or Club issues.

Winner: Warragul & Drouin Gazette. Journalist – Nicholas Duck. Bulldogs looking to the future.



It's often addressing hard issues which mark local newspaper's role in its community. A no-holds-barred in-depth review by journalist Nicholas Duck of the challenges facing the winless Bunyip Football Club, and the aspirations and commitment of the committee and supporters to change the Club's fortunes would have no doubt attracted keen readership and sparked plenty of discussion around town. The full-page presentation was supported by photographs highlighting the Club's strong culture.

Highly Commended: Cade Lucas – Wyndham Star Weekly. Whistle blows on ump shortage.

Strong marks to Star Weekly journalist Cade Lucas for addressing the challenging issue of shortage of umpires and referees and what is turning people off officiating matches. It can be a dry conversation, but Cade's story immediately engaged the reader with insight into a new family's involvement in umpiring Aussie Rules and maintained interest with interviews and comments, responsibly highlighting the challenges across sports.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Sports Story - continued

Circulation over 6,000

Highly Commended: Edwina Williams – Ballarat Times. Pushing the limits in the pool.

The best front page photo presentation in the Over 6000 Category scored well for Ballarat Times and provided a strong lead into Edwina Williams' story about a 15-year-old Ballarat swim club star's selection in the elite Victoria Flippers' squad. Interview comments on the local swimmer's ambitions and competing with national swim stars at Commonwealth Game trials added to the article.

Commended: Colin MacGillivray – North Central Review. Redbacks Reign

Two newspapers shared recognition for stories featuring Romsey Redbacks breaking a 40-year drought to win the Gisborne Cricket Association's McIntyre Cup. It was the strong back page headline and layout, an engaging match report spilling to second page and accompanied by six "people" photographs which scored points for Colin Mac Gillivray's report in North Central Review.

Commended: Bill West – Midland Express. Romsey's hard fight to glory.

Two newspapers are recognised for articles featuring Romsey Redbacks breaking a 40-year drought to win the Gisborne Cricket Association's McIntyre Cup. In the Midland Express, journalist Bill West featured a more conventional presentation, but scored well and added essential detail by including names of participants in photo captions, a match snapshot with the score sheet, plus a footnote about the win 40 years ago involving a youthful Peter McIntyre who eventually played test cricket for Australia.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Community Campaign *Sponsored by Manroland Goss*

Dennis Wickham from Manroland Goss presented these awards.

Judged by Ingrid Barham from the Today Group.

Circulation under 2,000

Overall Comments

The overall standard of submissions was commendable however my evaluation of this category focused on whether the entries effectively showcased the publication's role in initiating and championing campaigns on local issues. Reporting on an issue is important, but enhancing the impact and engagement of stories is achieved by actively urging readers and policymakers to take concrete actions. Regrettably, most entries fell short in providing substantiation of a multimedia approach or tangible community feedback, which constituted a crucial aspect of the judging criteria.

Winner: The Loddon Herald. Journalist Chris Earl – Calder Highway small town speed limits



A standout entry, this campaign effectively tackles road safety concerns along Inglewood's main street. It offers extensive coverage across multiple mediums. By engaging the audience with a reader poll, it fosters a cohesive narrative while the campaign's consistent logo and poster graphic promote the newspaper's advocacy. The entry demonstrates strong community feedback engagement, making it a comprehensive and impactful initiative. Well done.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Community Campaign

Circulation 2,000 - 6,000

Overall Comments

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Winner: Berwick Pakenham Gazette



Topic – The Road to respect

Star News Group has campaigned against family violence extensively over the past decade, devoting extensive coverage of the issue, particularly in the pages and website of its flagship publication the Pakenham Berwick Gazette. Over nine months from May 2022 to February 2023, the Gazette produced an 8-page lift out feature each month devoted to family violence in a campaign dubbed The Road To Respect.

Comments

An impactful campaign tackling Domestic Violence with compassion, combining data and personal stories to urge action. Special mention to Jamie Salter for 'Beware the little Red Flags,' emotionally engaging readers and emphasizing the urgency of addressing domestic violence.

Highly Commended: Casterton News – Kristy McDonald

Topic: Warrock Road Bridge Campaign

The campaign uses effective storytelling, clear structure, and ability to bring attention to a pressing local issue. It effectively conveys the concerns and frustrations of the community, holds those in power to account and ultimately delivers tangible outcomes for the community, making it a powerful piece of journalism.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Community Campaign

Circulation over 6,000

Overall Comments

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Winner: Warragul & Drouin Gazette

Supporting a community driven campaign lobbying for funds to build a new West Gippsland Hospital

Journalist Yvette Brand



Cracking front pages! The campaign excels in conveying the emotional and practical challenges faced by healthcare staff in a hospital that has reached its capacity and is dealing with maintenance issues in deteriorating buildings. By quoting various stakeholders including board members, and local activism groups and politicians, the campaign gives locals and their calls for urgent action a platform to be heard, in the lead up to the state election. It effectively amplifies the voices of those directly affected and encourages public discourse on the matter, which is a fundamental role of journalism.

Highly Commended: Melton & Moorabool Star Weekly – Liam McNally & Laura Michell

Topic: Campaign for state government funding for major road upgrades in the city of Melton.

The campaign covers the issue of road safety and infrastructure in Melton effectively, presenting compelling statistics, specific incidents, and personal anecdotes to support its argument. The call to action to join the petition or attend the event in each story is strong and compelling. The editorial supports the council's campaign but could benefit from quotes or statements from local officials or transportation experts to provide a more balanced perspective and offer potential solutions.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

The TAC Award for Road Safety *Sponsored by the TAC*

Samantha Cockfield from the TAC presented this award.

Samantha was also the judge for this category.

Open Circulation

Overall Comments

The TAC judges were impressed with the quality of entries and breadth of road safety issues highlighted across the submissions. The reporters behind the stories have shown tenacity in pursuing compelling local angles and case studies, highlighting real issues impacting communities. The captivating storylines and insights conveyed by local people in the articles showed a clear rapport had been established between journalist and subject. In addition, many newspapers are highlighting the shared community responsibility for road safety – with a noticeable and commendable trend around campaigning for speed reduction on local roads.

Winner: Warragul & Drouin Gazette. The Knock no one wants. Journalist – Alyssa Fritzlaff



Alyssa Fritzlaff from the Warragul & Drouin Gazette is the winner of the 2023 VCPA Award for Road Safety Reporting for an insightful and impactful article highlighting the police perspective of road trauma. Prompted by a tragic start to 2023 on Victorian roads and using current and relevant statistics, Alyssa's high-quality writing paints a compelling picture from start to finish that would leave any reader determined to drive safely. The insights that Alyssa has extracted from Sergeant Andrew Milbourne lay bare the unfathomable tasks that police face in attending fatal road crashes and informing loved ones of the worst news.

Highly Commended: Pakenham Gazette – Eleanor Wilson. On a mission to educate.

Eleanor Wilson from the Pakenham Gazette is highly commended for an outstanding human interest profile piece on Kerry Norton, who lost her husband and young daughter in one moment on the roads. The article perfectly captures how Kerry has harnessed her tragic experience to help people and make a positive impact. Such a gut-wrenching story can be difficult to articulate and capture all aspects of, but Eleanor has struck a great balance of emotion, impact and inspiration – all under the overarching message to drive safely.

Commended: Mansfield Courier. Road safety in Mansfield and Mt Buller

The Mansfield Courier is commended for displaying a sustained effort in highlighting a range of issues impacting road safety and road trauma in the paper's local region. The publication used local sources to generate multiple articles that touched on all aspects of a safe road system, while campaigning for behaviour changes and improvements to road safety in the area. The Mansfield Courier's clear focus on consistently informing their readership on road safety is to be admired.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Digital Innovation *Sponsored by Google News Initiative*

Tom Curtis from Google presented this award.

Judged by Peter Clark.

Open Circulation

Overall Comments

It was great to see entrants in this category moving beyond their website and using multiple media platforms to add depth and relevance to their coverage. The use of podcasts, video and live streams to convey information in interesting and often critical situations, entrenches each newspaper deeper into its community and adds further meaning to Arthur Miller's famous line – "a great newspaper, I suppose, is a nation (community) talking to itself."

Winner: Loddon Herald Flood Emergency – Live Coverage

LODDON HERALD
FREE EVERY THURSDAY

**BEST DIGITAL INNOVATION
THE FLOOD EMERGENCY – LIVE COVERAGE**

When the first indication of major flooding appeared in September 2022, the Loddon Herald was just over 18 months old as a newspaper. We had our website and Facebook platforms, the latter with around 1200 likes and 1500 followers – more were needed to better engage with readers and potential readers in our circulation area and beyond.

A couple of "club songs" in the rooms after football finals had achieved some increase. The "live" obviously enjoyed by existing followers in an area that had experienced the worst of the 2010-2011 floods.

"Live" reports were tested when the Loddon River went to moderate levels in the first flood risk moment during late September and then when the emergency became apparent and real from Thursday October 13 onwards. The reaction showed the toolkit had a valuable component for emergency communication with our residents. So too the format – not my face on camera but live vision of what was happening whether the river, sandbagging, traffic on flooding roads, communities responding, and the content – real time information gained from visual observations at live locations (subject to internet connection in poorly serviced areas), detail provided by "well placed" local leaders, interaction in comments that shared the latest from other communities in our area. A format that gave our viewers information well before official websites loaded with local information.

Our presentations became trusted and appreciated through a digital innovation in a not-necessarily technologically connected part of Victoria. Live broadcasts were made when there was information to share, and that needed to be shared. Our statistics showed views of the live videos would range from several thousands leading into the flood emergency, a massive 10,000 for the video on the morning after Bridgewater had flood (broadcast October 15) and remain around the thousands for each video for about fortnight. They were real, raw and reliable. Our innovation delivered other engagement benefits. As a result of the flood emergency live broadcasts, we now have just shy of 2000 likes and just under 3000 followers.

The live broadcasts connected our communities, assisted our one-person newspaper in gathering information that would assist in writing daily articles for our website and then also for the weekly print edition. The broadcasts also allowed us to become an online daily newspaper for our readers – the fast (although waters rose much slower in our northern areas) evolving emergency required timely information delivered with empathy and the best level of accuracy on information available.

As the floods rolled north, our model was taken up by a local CFA brigade in one community and a health service in another – the breadth of our coverage area and road closures prevented us from heading north for almost two weeks. Together though, we shared information by the resourceful use of digital media available to us, keeping communities abreast of the latest information and people safe. Our flood live coverage also led to a significant boost in readership of our online edition, particularly the edition the first weekend that recorded stats of more than 2000 impressions.

The "what the camera" sees style of content with tradition radio "live" reporting on the Facebook platform is proving a successful approach to increase engagement with our growing audience.

Published by:
MUSO'S MEDIA PTY LTD PO BOX 1188 KANGAROO FLAT 3555

A great use of digital platforms to perform a vital function during a local crisis. Bringing live updates to the community enhances the Loddon Herald's standing as a source of authoritative and credible information and demonstrates their ability to utilise all available platform features to connect with the community in the best and most relevant ways. The unscripted nature of live streaming gives the coverage a high level of authenticity. The Community were clearly engaged and better informed during a critical time.

Highly Commended: Warragul & Drouin Gazette Pre-season Podcasts

A great use of multiple platforms to increase the community's engagement with the newspaper's digital platforms. It is nice to see the journalists applying their skills on a variety of media and further embedding themselves in areas of high day to day relevance to the community. The podcasts were well produced and well promoted, and it is good to see that additional effort was put in to also video them.

P H O T O G R A P H Y

Best News Photo *Sponsored by Nikon*

Julie Kimpton from Nikon presented these awards.

Judge for the Best News Photo Category was Nigel Hallett.

Circulation under 2,000

Overall Comments

On the whole, what an amazing selection of news photography, a mixture of creative composition and being in the right place at the right time. Don't be afraid to crop in tight on pictures, when possible, to create maximum impact. Overall news photography is in a great place in this section.

Winner: Mclvor Times. Photography by Steve Womersley. 'Burning Up.'

To be on the scene of a fire when the flames are still burning for a photographer at a news event can be quite rare. To be in the right place at the right time is also quite rare. So, to capture this photo in a moment of panic is very well done and a much-deserved winner.

Highly Commended: Anne Richey – Alexandra Eildon Standard. 'Combined fire training for Alexandra and Yea brigades.'

A unique photograph that has a sense of theatre to it. Great capture and tightly cropped to place you at the scene.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best News Photo - continued

Circulation under 2,000

Highly Commended: Chris Earl – Loddon Herald. 'Close Call'.

A great news photograph showing the emotion and impact the fire had on a gentleman pictured. Nice composition and lighting to show the drama of the situation.



Commended: Rob Leeson – Tarrangower Times. 'First Responder Training'.

Nice use of lighting and elevation to capture a large group pf people.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best News Photo - continued

Circulation under 2,000

Commended: Chris Earl – Loddon Herald. 'Night of the flood.'

Great news photo, having the person in the frame adds a point of interest and gives the audience a sense of the scale of the flooding.



Commended: Chippy Rivera – Golden Plains Times . 'Award winning'.

Excellent use of depth of field and framed to lead your eye to the subject.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best News Photo

Circulation 2,000 - 6,000

Overall Comments

A high standard of entries, a number of the news pictures entered looked to belong to newspapers with a much higher circulation. A real credit to all involved and the effort made by these photographers has been noted.

Winner: Pakenham Gazette – Photography by Rob Carew. ‘Wombats Warming Hearts’.



A great photo and we must acknowledge the effort taken to reinvent the wheel to create this engaging image for your readership. Nice clean capture with a lot going on.

Highly Commended: Steve Huntley – Riverine Herald. ‘Double Act’.

Emotion, lighting, and composition are all on point with this capture, especially with the star shaped background lights positioned behind the subjects’ heads. The photograph grabs your attention on the page.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best News Photo - continued*Circulation 2,000 - 6,000***Highly Commended: Steve Huntley – Riverine Herald. ‘Rising Fear’.**

This photograph has all the elements required to accompany a newspaper story during a big news event. Especially the impact of a flood which will draw the local readers in. It's not always easy to get to these flooded remote places to capture such an image with roadblocks hampering your efforts too. Well done.

**Highly Commended: Glenn Guy – Hamilton Spectator. ‘Live and let fly’.**

When a photographer places themselves in a hairy position to get the shot it deserves recognition. Nicely framed, even allowing a place for the headline.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best News Photo

Circulation over 6,000

Overall Comments

An excellent quality of entries this year, there could have been multiple winners. The snappers at the big metro papers better watch out with this high standard of news photography and creative use of lighting in those certain situations when needed. Well done!

Winner: Cranbourne Star News – Photography Rob Carew. ‘Lantern Lights Up Lynbrook’



A beautiful moment captured in time, what a wonderful photograph that encapsulates the joy and togetherness of your local community. The picture just make you want to smile.

Highly Commended: Fearghus Browne – Warragul & Drouin Gazette. ‘Going Separate Ways’

An action shot at its finest, a great image captured at a not so perfect moment for the rider but a fine one for your readers.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best News Photo - continued

Circulation over 6,000

Commended: Michael Currie – Ballarat Times. 'Vikings pride'.

Excellent use of lighting to make the picture pop, also an epic way to deal with a large number of subjects in the one shot and to still make it interesting.

**Commended: Eve Lamb – Midland Express. 'Bid to host games'.**

A great set up to create an extra form of interest in the photo and the composition is right on point.

**Commended: Damjan Janevski – Northern Star Weekly . 'The time for spooky fun'.**

Very creative, spooky and a very engaging image.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Sports Photo *Sponsored by Nikon*

Judged by Julie Kimpton (Julie represented Nikon as a sponsor and judged the Best Sports Photo Category).

Circulation under 2,000

Overall Comments

There were a couple of standout images in this category where the photographer had clearly made an excellent decision in their choice of lens, use of flash, proximity to the subject and or angle of capture to enhance their picture. Higher scores were granted to images that told a story and used the environment to add to the picture, had clean backgrounds, without foreground distractions, paid careful attention to cropping, captured the decisive moment, and portrayed an emotive response.

Winner: Mclvor Times – Photography by Peter Weaving. 'Roll Up!'



Great low angle of view. The composition and lighting is really strong and love the clean background. Well done.

Commended: Chris Earl – Loddon Herald. 'Bowlers in control'

Skilful capture, sharp and well composed moment of the game. Shot against a relatively clean background at a local cricket ground which can often be challenging. Well done.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Sports Photo

Circulation 2,000 - 6,000

Overall Comments

Some great images in this category, both technically and visually, with a number that scored in the high 80's. I looked for great composition, capturing the decisive moment, clean backgrounds and images that told a story and invoked emotion. This was a challenging category to judge and overall, a very high standard of entries. Well done to all the photographers.

Winner: Wangaratta Chronicle – Photography by Melissa Beattie. 'Head to head'.



Excellent action shot capturing the defining and agonising moment of the game. The image is sharp, well cropped, has a good depth of field and tells a powerful story.

Highly Commended: Glenn Guy – Hamilton Spectator. 'High flyer'.

Sharp image, low angle of view works well showing height and the rider captured against clean white background. Would have liked to see riders at base of image uncropped.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Sports Photo - continued*Circulation 2,000 - 6,000***Commended: Ann Killeen – Yarrawonga Chronicle. 'Rodeo thrills and spills'**

Well done on capturing the rider being thrown from the horse and the emotion on the faces of the people in the crowd. Great shot that stands out on the page.

**Commended: Joel King – Colac Herald. 'It's a dirty job but someone's gotta do it'**

A really fun image and great capture. Love the expression and mud. Congratulations.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Sports Photo

Over 6,000

Overall Comments

A number of images demonstrating a great understanding of lens choice and focal length. Using wider-angle lenses up very close to the subject and actions directed the viewers eye to the subject and not the background. Also, the use of super telephoto lenses which focus in on the subject only, removing the background. I particularly like some of the images where the photographers have made the sport look like art and found myself amused by some of the action and celebratory shots in this category. Congratulations to all the photographers.

Winner: The Weekly Advertiser – Photography by Paul Carracher. 'In the swim'.



Great lighting, motion, and expression on the swimmer's face.

Swimming can be a difficult sport to photograph well. You have created a sharp and emotive image. Well done.

Commended: Paul Carracher – The Weekly Advertiser. 'Caneball Calling'.

Fabulous capture showing power and skill of the athlete. Clever angle of view.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Photo Study *Sponsored by Nikon*

Julie Kimpton from Nikon presented these awards.

Judged by Lauren Murphy.

Circulation under 2,000

Overall Comments

Photographers play a special role in not only documenting our communities but engaging with them. The award entries showed an incredible array of photographs highlighting the spirit of living in regional communities. If I could offer any encouragement for strengthening some photos it would be to finesse composition and look for that extra step you can take as a photographer to engage the reader deeper with the subject. That may be getting in closer, utilising lighting to compliment the emotion of the photo or photographing from a different perspective. Congratulations to every entry.

Winner: Loddon Herald – Photography by Chris Earl. ‘Campbell loves his Golden Girls’

Chris has captured an emotive close-up portrait that invites the reader into the close relationship his subject has with his chickens. The background gives a glimpse into the environment without taking away from the portrait. The composition and lighting strengthen the photo.

Highly Commended: Anne Richey – The Yea Chronicle. ‘Combined fire training for Alexandra and Yea Bridges’

This photograph incites an emotional response with the intensity of fire and water. The slower shutter speed creates an almost painterly effect which draws the viewer into the moment. Fantastic photograph,



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Photo Study - continued

Circulation under 2,000

Commended: Chris Earl – Loddon Herald. ‘Strength and Resilience’.

Well composed photograph that shows the photographer has taken the effort to think through how to tell the story in one image.

**Commended: Steve Womersley – Golden Plain Times. ‘Golden festival keeps giving back to the community’.**

Well timed capture of the performer on stage.

**Commended: Max Davies – Whittlesea Review. ‘Rodeo Riders’.**

A strong action shot that captures the emotion on rider and horse. Demonstrates strong technical ability by the photographer. Image may have been strengthened further by watching straight horizon lines and exploring lighting dynamics by adding flash.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Photo Study

Circulation 2,000 – 6,000

Overall Comments

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Winner: Berwick Pakenham Gazette – Photography by Stewart Chambers. 'A Wet Day at Western Port'



Emotionally powerful image that captures the action of weekend sport away from the ball. The subject gaze leads us to believe more is happening out of the frame, yet her stance in total isolation from others in the pouring rain demands our full attention. Well observed moment to capture.

Highly Commended: Tony Harrington – Mansfield Courier. 'Underflip'.

Striking portrait of a subject that can be hard to photograph. The composition and contrasting colours of the crest against the snow make this a captivating image.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Photo Study - continued

Circulation 2,000 – 6,000

Highly Commended: Riley Upton, Christie Harrison, Michael Thompson – The Maryborough District Advertiser. 'Locals Rally'.

During crisis moments a photographer can be limited with access and viewpoints. This photograph is well composed, setting the scene from a distance of a perilous moment.



Commended: Stewart Chambers – Pakenham Gazette. 'Salute to Fallen'.

Well composed photo showing technical skill to tell a strong story without showing faces.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Photo Study

Circulation over 6,000

Overall Comments

Photographers play a special role in not only documenting our communities but engaging with them. The award entries showed an incredible array of photographs highlighting the spirit of living in regional communities. If I could offer any encouragement for strengthening some photos it would be to finesse composition and look for that extra step you can take as a photographer to engage the reader deeper with the subject. That may be getting in closer, utilising lighting to compliment the emotion of the photo or photographing from a different perspective. Congratulations to every entry.

Winner: North Central Review – Photography by Colin MacGillivray. 'Wrestler dethroned'.



Fantastic High Energy action shot. Well timed capture and camera angle that helps freeze an impending moment.

Highly Commended: Amanda Emary – Warragul & Drouin Gazette. 'Farming Life'.

Beautiful portrait showing the photographer has engaged genuinely with their subject. A timeless portrait that captures a lifelong farming story.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Photo Study - continued

Circulation over 6,000

Highly Commended: Ivan Kemp – Geelong Independent. 'Geelong comes alive for one White Night'

Strong event photography that captures various performances at the festival. Strong technical skills shooting in low light conditions.



Commended: A Hume – Midland Express. 'Festival Fun'

A lovely documentary portrait. The closeness of the photographer to the subject creates intimacy for the reader to the moment between mother and daughter.



Commended: Colin MacGillivray – North Central Review. 'Jesse James on the world stage'

An engaging portrait that draws the reader in to the subject. Could have been further strengthened by exploring tighter cropping and strobe lighting.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

The Nikon Award for Best Overall Photo

Like the other photography awards, this award is sponsored by Nikon who have generously donated a camera.

Open Circulation

Winner: Wangaratta Chronicle – Photography by Melissa Beattie. 'Head to head'.



Melissa got a Trophy and a fabulous Nikon Z6II / 24-70 F4Z camera kit valued at \$4599 RRP.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

A D V E R T I S I N G

Best Print Ad *Sponsored by The TAC*

Samantha Cockfield from the TAC presented these awards.

Judged by Damian Morgan.

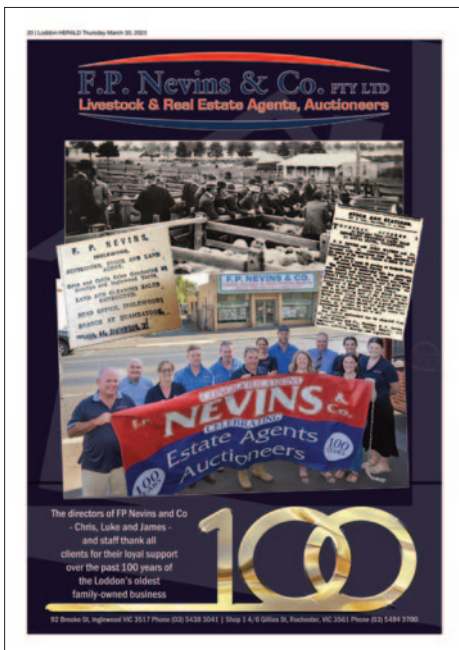
Circulation under 2,000

Overall Comments

A strong series of locally produced advertisements that made good use of locally shot photography and simple copywriting.

A simple ad that is accurately targeted and authentic will always be more effective than highly produced advertisements that are confused, and the ads in this category were a win for substance over style alone.

**Winner: Loddon Herald – Chris Earl.
FP Nevins and Co Centenary**



This full-page ad tells the story of the 100-year-old business with a great mix of nostalgia and modernity. It positions the business as a thriving modern service provider while capturing a strong sense of trust, stability, and local contribution.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Print Ad

Circulation 2,000 – 6,000

Overall Comments

The ads in this category were of a very high standard, and some brilliant examples of using ¼ page ads to cut through and communicate on a busy page. Simplicity of design and hard-hitting, targeted headlines were a highlight.

Winner: Snowy River Mail

Eyecare Plus



This is a bold and highly targeted ad that appeals directly to the reader's risk of losing something if they don't take action, while retaining a premium aesthetic for a high-end optometry practice. A great mix of brand building with a strong call to action.

Commended: The Maryborough District Advertiser

Nicholas Rossi & Michelle Wylie

We're still out delivering gas through all kinds of weather!

Very targeted and high impact. The use of a local face on the stock photo makes it much more engaging and authentic. A clever ad.

Commended: Berwick Pakenham Gazette – Kelly Price

Casey Osteopathy Health Services

A strong and targeted headline with a positive call to action.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Print Ad

Circulation over 6,000

Overall Comments

A highly competitive category with some clever copywriting and strong production values. The full-page ads in this category were a standout, making great use of the space to cut through and not over complicate.

Winner: The Weekly Advertiser – Lee Meadows & Kelly Laird Greentember Advertisement



A bold ad that leverages the iconic John Deere brand into a local seasonal sale without cheapening the brand or the dealership. The ad is attention grabbing and creates a sense of urgency but retains the premium values of John Deere and the dealership.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - **JUDGES COMMENTS**

Best Advertising Feature *Sponsored by Pongrass Publishing Systems*

Elizabeth Hely-Hammond from Pongrass presented these awards.

Judged by Country Press New South Wales president Lucie Peart.

Circulation under 2,000

Overall Comments

The standard of entries in this year's Best Advertising Feature category made it very difficult to judge. With so many different ideas, events and celebrations, the pages of the Victorian Newspapers came alive with the feature content. With engaging editorial and pages full of advertising, it's clear that the sales and journalism teams are indeed working very hard.

From the local show, a community or newspaper publisher's milestone to a huge regional event, the advertising features submitted for judging were all of a high standard. Congratulations to all the entrants and keep up the good work!

Winner: The Euroa Gazette

Celebrating 125 years



It's not often that the newspaper itself gets to be the main attraction for advertisers, mostly it's the vehicle. In the case of the 125th anniversary feature for the Euroa Gazette, it is the history of the paper and its future direction that is the reason to celebrate. The supporting advertisers made reference to the subject and the editorial content, of which community also shone through, was well presented and well researched. Congratulations to the Euroa Gazette on a great advertising feature in the under 2000 circulation category.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Advertising Feature

Circulation 2,000 – 6,000

Overall Comments

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Winner: Gannawarra Times

Dining Guide



The Gannawarra Times Dining Guide was a strong entry. It was a comprehensive guide, complete with QR code links for all advertisers. The guide included an easy-to-read ranking system for dining offers and the reader was able to get a strong sense of each businesses services. Well done.

Highly Commended: The Guardian. 'Jobs in the Region'.

Jobs in the Region by The Guardian is a strong entry in this year's awards. An advertising feature filled with colourful and enticing job offers, celebrating the vast opportunities for the region. With the advertorial display of some longer form display ads, the lack of feature advertorial didn't detract from the overall message - that there is a place and a job for everyone. Well done.

Commended: Snowy River Mail. 'Beef Week'.

A strong entry, worthy of a commended mark. Good editorial content and advertising gave the 2022 Beef Week feature by the Snowy River Mail an edge over other features.

Commended: Berwick Pakenham Gazette

'Farewell Ma'am' - 16-page tribute on the passing of Queen Elizabeth II from a local viewpoint.

A once in a generation opportunity to commemorate the life of Queen Elizabeth II, the Pakenham Gazette's special tribute feature was a commended entry. The well researched historical account of the life of her late majesty was intertwined with modern advertising in tribute to her service. Well done.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Advertising Feature

Circulation over 6,000

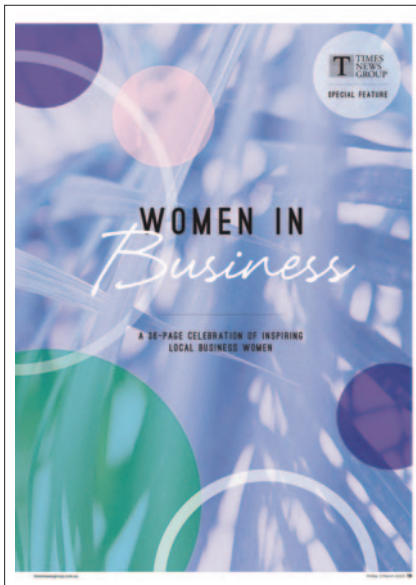
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Winner: The Ballarat Times

Women in Business 2023



A beautifully presented 26-page feature on Women in Business was a standout advertising feature. The editorial content celebrated the various stories of each subject and offered an insight into their passions, business ideas and community offerings. The feature was well supported with accompanying advertising, aligning with the editorial content to create a vast and interesting feature.

Highly Commended: Bairnsdale Advertiser – East Gippsland Field Days 2023

A huge display of the local field day. Full of editorial and matching advertorial content. Great depth of promotion and information for the event, with accompanying topics.

Highly Commended: Berwick Star News – Showcasing Casey

A wonderful promotion of the area. The feature offered the reader a good mix of community and business, in an easy to browse layout.

Commended: Bellarine Times – Bellarine Arts Trail

A colourful and arty introduction to an event three years in the making. It gave the reader an insight into the various activities of the arts festival, packaged in a vibrant design. Adverts enticed the reader to attend this busy event.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Best Digital Advertisement *Sponsored by Pongrass Publishing Systems*

Judged by Peter Clark

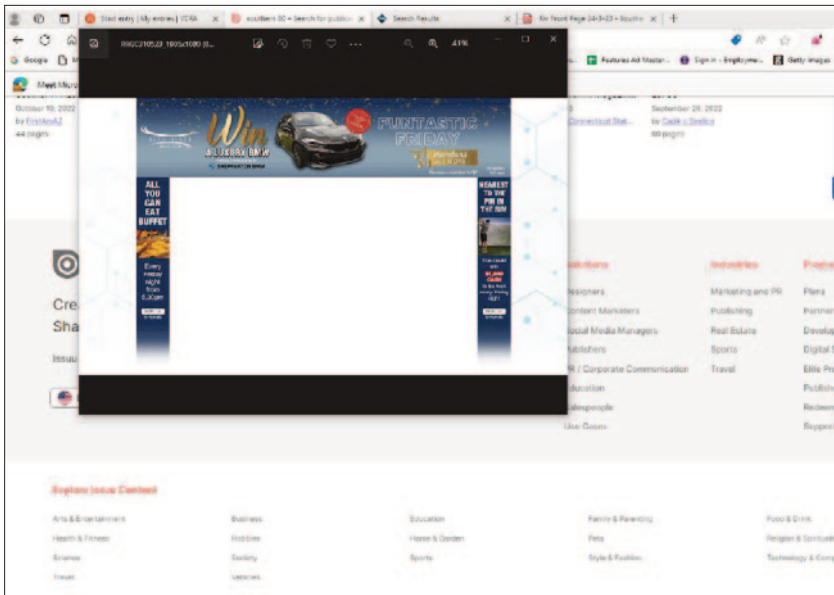
Open Circulation

Overall Comments

It has been great to see a progression in the quality of advertisements in this category over the last few years, particularly with many entrants using creative and varied ad shapes and sophisticated executions. Often less is more when it comes to text on limited space digital advertisements, so imagery and clear call to actions become increasingly important. The best ads in this category scored particularly well in these two areas.

Winner: Riverine Herald

Ad – Rich River Golf Club Skin



Well laid out, eye-catching advertisement, Great use of design and effective ad placement. Utilises the advertising space available on the webpage well. Each section has a clear call to action and an enticing message for the viewer. Overall, a great use of a digital advertising asset. This Ad is my pick for winner in this category.

Highly Commended: Kyabram Free Press

Ad – Kyabram Rodeo

Great advertisement, really captures the spirit of the event without being too text heavy. Good use of imagery, attractive layout, and good transition between slides with a clear call to action on the last slide. Says everything it needs to say without saying too much.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

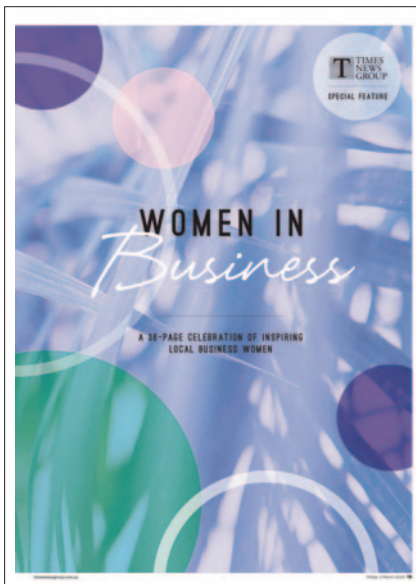
Best Mag / Special Publication *Sponsored by Pongrass Publishing Systems*

Eizabeth from Pongrass Publishing presented these awards.

Judged by Renee Bennett.

Open Circulation**Overall Comments**

All entries in this category were of a high calibre and it was great to see the talent of the editorial and advertising teams shine in these publications. It stood out that advertisers see great value in these special publications with most very well supported. The advertising designs and concepts were excellent with many clever headlines and descriptions. The local editorial content was strong, and you can see the time invested into producing quality publications. Overall, all publications were well designed, informative, and creative with lucrative advertising revenue. It is great to see newspapers branching out into standalone publications not necessarily inserted into the paper by way of valuable tourism booklets/products to share the stories of regional areas. Well done to everyone.

Winner: The Geelong Times – Women in business

An exceptional publication extremely well supported by local advertisers. The editorial was informative and a pleasure to read. All advertisements were well designed and of a high quality. What made it stand out was the clean, uniform layout which had attractive creative elements and the right mix of photos making the publication draw your attention. The layout made the advertisements stand out and not compete for attention with other elements on the page. I would believe all advertisers would be impressed with the high-quality elements on the page. I would believe that all advertisers would be impressed with the high-quality publication. Well done!

Highly Commended: Surf Coast Times. 'Swell - 60 Years of Stoke'

Well written stories and excellent photography, even in the advertisements. It is what you would expect from a surf publication. There was a high level of advertising support. The advertisements were eye-catching and designed well to suit the publication demographic.

Commended: Riverine Herald. 'Bride & Groom - Echuca Moama 2022'

A beautifully designed wedding publication featuring stunning photography. The booklet has a well-designed layout with the photos as the hero of the page. The reduction of brightness in the photos and matt internal paper stock provided a high-end modern look. The stories were well written and what you would expect for a bridal publication.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Overall Newspaper Excellence *Sponsored by Google News Initiative*

Tom Curtis from Google presented the awards.

Circulation under 2,000

Judged by Carolyn Turner.

Overall Comments

The newspapers in the up to 2000 circulation were great examples of what regional newspapers do best – keep their local communities well informed. Despite small newsrooms they punch well above their weight.

The role of well-connected regional newspapers was ably presented in all entries and particularly in the winning and highly commended entries. It was particularly pleasing to see the winning Horsham Times was launched when a lot of papers throughout rural Australia closed.

Winner: The Horsham Times



While some mastheads were closing as a result of COVID, The Horsham Times saw opportunity and responded to community need and clearly has not looked back. It is an excellent community newspaper. Its Wimmera in flood edition is a fine example of what newspapers do best – keeping communities well informed in times of disaster. Its rural section is excellent. The three editions are well supported by advertising. Its front-page photographs are outstanding.

Highly Commended: Loddon Herald

Every entry of the Loddon Herald represented strong front pages, followed by a wide variety of local news and sport showing a strong connection with its community. Each 24-page edition was well supported with advertising. Great photographs as well, particularly those relating to catastrophic flooding.

Highly Commended: Castlemaine Mail

As Lisa Dennis said in her supporting comments, the Castlemaine Mail prides itself on focussing on local news, local people, and local stories – the core of any regional local paper. It is well supported by local advertising. Production and photography are excellent.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Overall Newspaper Excellence

Circulation 2,000 – 6,000

Judged by Country Press South Australia president Darren Robinson

Overall Comments

At its core, our purpose is to provide a local news service for the communities we serve.

A good newspaper should help foster a sense of community pride, provide residents with a voice, and act as a community watchdog. A great newspaper wields unrivalled influence and has the ability to overturn inferior decisions (or remove the decision-makers responsible for them). Great newspapers also help to stimulate discussions and ignite constructive conversations through compelling, local focused journalism.

In general, it was pleasing to see a very high standard of entries in this category this year. With respect, it may be considered that some publishers have great access to resources, and these publications often benefit from additional investment, especially in editorial and photography.

Based on the copies provided, the judging process centred around assessing the quality and consistency of advertising, production, editorial content, and photography. Additionally, I also considered the overall look, feel and tone of each masthead across the judging criteria.

Winner: The Wangaratta Chronicle



The Chronicle proved to be an absolute delight to read. Each page is bursting with captivating photography and eye-catching advertisements to engage the reader. The newspaper oozes a distinctive personality, enhanced by its exceptional segments. The Chronicle is extremely polished and delivers a standard of unwavering consistency.

A great mix of hard-hitting journalism, community news and advertising features is complemented by the publication's sport coverage. The advertising content was very reasonable, and the artwork has been created to a high standard. Of particular note are the special sections such as a the 'Home & Garden' lift out, a 36-page Football and Netball preview and a 'Choose Local' promotion. It is obvious that a great deal of care and consideration was invested in each page. The Classified pages included a healthy level of content, which is a testament to the high regard in which the publication is held within its readership.

Overall Newspaper Excellence - continued

Circulation 2,000 – 6,000

Judged by Country Press South Australia president Darren Robinson

Highly Commended: Berwick Pakenham Gazette

The *Gazette* had an impressive weight, proudly boasting a substantial pagination of up to 92 pages of exceptional content within the editions provided for judging. Noteworthy, the layout was clean and consistent throughout.

Under the astute guidance of Gary Howe and his news team, the *Gazette* provides excellent coverage across local news, entertainment, sport and targeted features. The inclusion of segments like “thumbs up thumbs down” and “Socially Speaking” within the opinion pages proves to be a great addition, offering the reader a quick insight into current matters.

The level of advertising was notably healthy across all three editions supplied, which is always a positive sign of community engagement.

The quality of photography was consistently great, with a particularly impressive showcase in sport. I'd be surprised if their photos aren't recognised by way of an award or two this year. Remarkably, a single point separated *The Gazette* from this year's winner.

Commended: Riverine Herald

The Riverine Herald is a commendable example of a comprehensive all-round publication. Notably, its outstanding local segments including 'Reflections from our past' provide a detailed tapestry of local history and is aided with the 'fun fact' breakouts. The 'Community billboard' encouraged non-for-profit entities to contribute their newsworthy snippets which may have otherwise been excluded.

Advertising was also very reasonable. It is evident that a great deal of pride and consideration has gone into creating purpose-driven house ads rather than taking a quick approach to 'fill a gap'.

The Riverine Herald upholds an impressive standard in photography and often included supplementary images to complement the hero photo of stories which spanned multiple pages. This is helpful in enhancing the reader's experience.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

Overall Newspaper Excellence

Circulation over 6,000

Judged by Rob Duffield.

Winner: Warragul & Drouin Gazette



The Gazette is an outstanding bulky high-volume newspaper which provides a breath of local news and photographic coverage to its growing communities consistently well. Pages are laid out extremely well with a good balance of different sized stories and regular features. Story length is not too long. Production quality is consistently high with staff taking every opportunity to capture every possible ad feature for each weekly edition. The papers coverage of history needs to be commended. As does its support for its communities through its community initiatives like the Big Blokes BBQ and Farmworld. I loved the Bricks and Bouquets have your say column. Well done Andrew, Yvette and team.

NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

NATIONAL AWARDS 2023

Sponsored by Google News Initiative

Winners from the respective state award nights, held across 2023 were collated and judged to determine who earned the honour of being the inaugural overall national winner and the right to call themselves a national champion. These awards were judged by the senior staff at Regional Media Connect and the VCPA Executive Officer, Peter Kennedy.

Overall Comments:

These awards were a delight to look back upon as the best of the very best. CPA publications continue to produce an incredible array of work across all facets of the industry.

The decision to recognise excellence at the national level is in itself to be commended, and congratulations go to the very worthy winners of these inaugural awards.

Best National Photo

Winner: Gympie Today

Bring It On – by Shane Zahner



This photo makes you want to know more, and especially what came next. One hulking footy player preparing to be met by a much smaller and lighter would-be defender, brilliantly captured in a photo that immediately engages the reader. There is power, courage, determination and passion in this photo and the photographer deserves praise for recognising just how good the shot really is.

NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

NATIONAL AWARDS 2023

Best National News Story

Winner: Numurkah Leader – Council to be dismissed – by Dominique Cosgriff



Local government is a staple subject matter for most regional and rural newspapers, and this story is a great reminder that newspapers exist to serve the governed, and not the governing.

It takes courage to present a story as strongly as the Numurkah Leader has done, and the masthead should be proud of the way it covered such a significant chapter in the community's recent history with such informative and in-depth reporting.

Best National Ad

Winner: Bundaberg Today – Giant bikes - Oh what fun it is to ride.



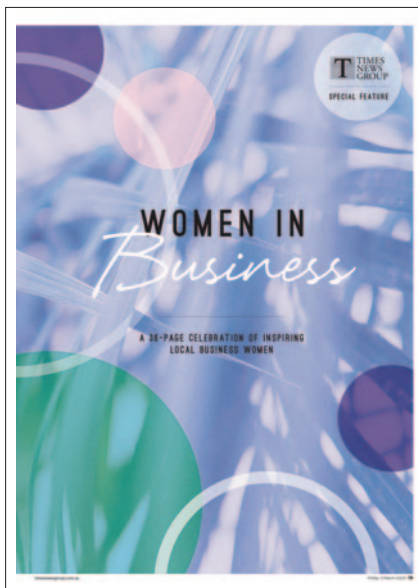
The Bundaberg Today team dared to be different in presenting this advertisement for a local bike shop across two pages in a way seldom seen before, and they are to be congratulated for being brave enough to do so. A simple, but clever idea that is as playful as it is engaging, and an idea likely to be replicated elsewhere in the future.

NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

NATIONAL AWARDS 2023

Best National Magazine/Special Publication

Winner: Geelong Times – Women in business



The Geelong Times Women in Business Special Publication is a great combination of both commercial and editorial content, just as every initiative of this type should be.

Page after page, the consistency and quality of the layout and content ensured readers were well informed and the supporting businesses received value for their well-placed investment.

NOVEMBER 17, 2023 - JUDGES COMMENTS

NATIONAL AWARDS 2023

Best Overall National Newspaper

Winner: Gympie Today



Like a number of regional publications, the Gympie Today publication arose from the demise of News Limited in large parts of country Queensland, and the success enjoyed by Gympie Today is an incredible success story for the paper's staff, its management and most importantly, the local community.

Gympie Today is a powerhouse publication, filled with quality public interest journalism that is engaging for the reader, accompanied by great photography and an abundance of advertising content that underlines the local community's support of the paper that supports them.

Highly Commended: The Leader

In such a star-studded category, it was difficult to pick the winner, and South Australia's *The Leader* deserves to be acknowledged for its commitment to community journalism. This is a paper that is obviously much-loved and enjoyed by its readers.

A heady mix of strong reporting across a wide range of content, including police, politics, community and local sport, *The Leader* is a great example of what a local paper should be.

The Leader earned a Highly Commended acknowledgement in this prestigious category.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 17, 2023



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