

Kennedy Awards source of pride for independent ACM

Tuesday, August 13, 2019 - The newly independent and privately owned Australian Community Media has reaffirmed its reputation as Australia's leading regional and rural media business by winning two prestigious Kennedy Awards for excellence in journalism.

The agenda-setting investigations of Newcastle Herald journalists Joanne McCarthy and Sam Rigney were recognised at the 2019 NRMA Kennedy Awards in Sydney on Friday.

McCarthy won the Chris Watson Award for Outstanding Regional Newspaper Reporting for her work to [uncover the devastating impact of surgical mesh implants](#).

Fittingly, the award is named in memory of the late Newcastle Herald editor Chris 'Watto' Watson, who died in 2014.

Sponsored by The Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism and Ideas, the prize includes a significant grant to allow the winning journalist to undertake a future reporting project or projects on regional issues.

Rigney won the award for Outstanding Court Reporting, eclipsing fellow finalists The Sunday Telegraph and ABC News, for his powerful writing unmasking [notorious serial rapist Andrew James Benn](#) and highlighting the courage of his victims and their fight for justice.

ACM Managing Director Allen Williams congratulated McCarthy and Rigney on their wins and the company's other 2019 Kennedy Awards finalists.

"We're incredibly proud of the quality of ACM's agenda-setting journalism and it's wonderful to see the powerful storytelling of Joanne and Sam recognised among the nation's best," Williams said.

Rigney's series was also a finalist for the Chris Watson Award, while McCarthy and the Sydney Morning Herald's Amanda Hooton were co-nominees for the Jim Oram Award for Outstanding Feature Writing for their piece in the Good Weekend on surgical mesh implants.

Newcastle Herald colleagues Donna Page and Nick Bielby were also finalists for Outstanding Reporting on the Environment for their series [Dirty Deeds](#), which revealed that millions of litres of toxic waste had been secretly pumped into creeks in the Hunter Valley town of Maitland.

Williams said the Kennedy Awards showed the strength of ACM and its journalism following the company's move into private ownership last month.

"Around the country we have so many talented people who are deeply committed to their mastheads and their communities, and passionate about delivering results for the audiences and customers they serve," Williams said.

Interests associated with former Domain CEO Antony Catalano and Alex Waislitz's Thorney Investment Group took control of the former Fairfax Media regional publishing division from Nine Entertainment on July 1.

With more than 160 news brands publishing online and in print, the ACM network includes 14 daily titles, such as The Canberra Times, Newcastle Herald, The Courier in Ballarat and The Examiner in Launceston, and the country's largest agricultural media business, including The Land in NSW, Queensland Country Life, Farm Weekly in Western Australia and Stock Journal in South Australia.

For more information, email communications@austcommunitymedia.com.au

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