

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

Regional Australia's most outstanding journalism honoured at ACM Excellence Awards

Regional Australia's most outstanding journalism has been celebrated at the 2025 ACM Excellence Awards, with *The Canberra Times* named masthead of the year, *Queensland Country Life* winning best agricultural publication in its 90th year and the *Goulburn Post* winning best community title.

The annual awards recognise the best news and sport coverage, commentary and commercial content produced by the websites and newspapers of the ACM network, Australia's largest independent publisher of regional news.

Journalist Tim Piccione of *The Canberra Times* was presented with the top individual honour, the Gold ACME for Journalist of the Year, for his body of work over 2025, including an investigation into policing in the ACT.

Crime reporter Anna Falkenmire of the *Newcastle Herald* was named Young Journalist of the Year and Emily Clooney of *The Advocate* in north-west Tasmania was named Sports Journalist of the Year.

ACM editorial director Rod Quinn congratulated this year's winners.

"In these days of robots and fakery, our journalists put themselves in places where our readers cannot go," he said.

"They bear witness to the triumphs and the tragedies, the happiness and the heartbreak, and they convey those moments to our audiences. Our communities are better for it.

"What our journalists do is not optional in a democracy. And it is more important now than ever."

Presented in Sydney on Tuesday, December 9, the awards are now in their fifth year.

The judges said Mr Piccione's quiet persistence helped *The Canberra Times* set the daily news agenda in the national capital.

Ms Falkenmire's crime coverage for the *Newcastle Herald* was praised for "compassionate, human-centred storytelling giving a voice to victims of crime".

Managing editor John-Paul Moloney accepted the Regional Masthead of the Year trophy on behalf of the *The Canberra Times*, which also won Campaign of the Year for its exclusive series on Transurban's Sydney toll errors stinging unsuspecting ACT drivers.

Queensland Country Life, one of ACM's specialist weekly titles serving Australia's important rural and farm sector, was named Best Agricultural Masthead of 2025.

Celebrating its 90th year of publishing this year, *Queensland Country Life* was represented at the awards by former editor Lucy Kinbacher and acting editor Sally Gall.

Editor Sally Foy, who oversees the *Goulburn Post* on the NSW Southern Tablelands, accepted the award for Best Community Masthead, and also won Commentary of the Year for her own writing.

Dane Wilson, of Dubbo's *Daily Liberal*, was named Trainee of the Year and Kim Chappell, who guides online publishing of local news coverage as regional digital editor, was named Coach/Mentor of the Year.

The Border Mail, which covers the Albury/Wodonga region on the NSW-Victorian border, was recognised for its rolling coverage of a hospital rally led by local mayors and health advocates that travelled by train to state parliament in Melbourne.

The newsrooms of *The Advocate* in north-west Tasmania and *The Standard* in Warrnambool, were also recognised for their efforts this year to serve their communities and grow digital subscriptions.

Journalists Ben Silvester and Anna Houlahan were praised for their outstanding travel writing and video coverage for the ACM network's popular *Explore* website and Saturday print magazine.

Full list of 2024 ACM Excellence Awards winners

Gold ACME Journalist of the Year
Winner: Tim Piccione, *The Canberra Times*

Young Journalist of the Year
Winner: Anna Falkenmire, *Newcastle Herald*

Masthead of the Year - Regional
Winner: *The Canberra Times*

Masthead of the Year - Agricultural
Winner: *Queensland Country Life*

Masthead of the Year - Community
Winner: *Goulburn Post*

Editorial Director's Award
Winner: *The Advocate*

Media Release



Sports Journalist of the Year
Winner: Emily Clooney, *The Advocate*

Trainee of the Year
Winner: Dane Wilson, *Daily Liberal*

Mentor of the Year
Winner: Kim Chappell, Regional Digital Editor

Building A Subscriber Community
Winner: *The Standard*

Team Collaboration
Winner: *The Border Mail* Hospital Rally Goes to Parliament

Best Video
Winner: Anna Houlahan, *Explore*
Highly commended: Sophia Baker, *The Standard*

Campaign of the Year
Winner: *The Canberra Times* Transurban Toll Errors Revealed

Commentary of the Year
Winner: Sally Foy, *Southern Highland News*
Highly commended: Alise McIntosh, *Western Advocate*

Explore Travel Story of the Year
Winner: Ben Silvester
Highly commended: Anna Houlahan

Feature Story of the Year
Winner: Beau Greenway, *The Border Mail*
Highly commended: Sage Swinton, *Newcastle Herald*

Court Story of the Year
Winner: Breanna Chillingworth, *The Northern Daily Leader*
Highly commended: *The Advocate*

News Story of the Year - Regional
Winner: Gabriel Fowler, *Newcastle Herald*
Highly commended: Ciara Bastow, *Daily Liberal*

Sport Story of the Year
Winner: Grace Hamilton, *Illawarra Mercury*
Highly commended: Samantha Townsend, *The Land*

Media Release



Story of the Year - Community

Winner: James Parker, *Bega District News*

Highly commended: Tim Grey, *Bay Post*

Story of the Year - Agricultural

Winner: Andrew Marshall, *farmonline.com.au*

Property Story of the Year

Winner: Gwen Liu, *The Courier*

Highly commended: Jade Lazarevic, *Newcastle Herald*

Production/presentation of the Year

Winner: Jamie Horne

Highly commended: Josh Hall

Digital Execution of the Year

Winner: Ayden Dawkins

News Photo of the Year - Regional

Winner: Peter Lorimer, *Newcastle Herald*

Sport Photo of the Year - Regional

Winner: Anna Warr, *Illawarra Mercury*

Photo of the Year - Agricultural

Winner: Simon Chamberlain, *The Land*

Photo of the Year - Community

Winner: Ben Smyth, *Bega District News*

Magazine of the Year

Winner: Spring Angus 2025, ACM Agri

Highly commended: Maitland Flood 70th Anniversary, *The Maitland Mercury*

Commercial Feature of the Year

Regionals & Communities winner: Big Steps, Little Feet, *The Courier*

Agricultural winner: FarmFest 50 Years Official Guide

Paid Content Campaign

Winner: "Save Your Skin" for the Cancer Council

Highly commended: Tractor Games, *The Land*

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About Australian Community Media (ACM)

ACM is Australia's largest independent media company, collectively reaching over 5.2* million people each month. The ACM network comprises close to 100 brands, including leading regional news mastheads The Newcastle Herald, The Canberra Times, Illawarra Mercury, The Examiner, The Border Mail and The Courier.

The agricultural division, ACM Agri, reaches 85%^ of Australian farmers each month with a national footprint of agricultural specialist brands (The Land and Queensland Country Life), marketplaces (Farmbuy and Ag Trader), and events (AgQuip and FarmFest).

We are passionate about keeping our communities strong, informed, and connected. ConnectNow with ACM.

Source: ^QARS, (Heartbeat of Australia), May 2025. *Roy Morgan Single Source, June 2025, P14+, Roy Morgan iris, ACM Cross Platform Audience.