



2017 Telstra & Rural Business Support Rural Media Award Winners Announced

From record numbers of outstanding entries, News Corp's Rural Editor at The Advertiser, Belinda Willis and News Corp photographer Matt Turner have taken home the major prizes at the 2017 Telstra & Rural Business Support Rural Media Awards announced at the Adelaide Showground today.

Belinda Willis is currently The Advertiser Newspaper's Rural Editor, overseeing the coverage of issues affecting rural businesses and communities across the state. Her journalistic career spans more than 20 years and includes stints with the BBC, Discovery Networks and the North West Evening Mail in England, the former Times Tribune newspaper in California and with a former Australian Federal Environment Minister.

Telstra's State Media Manager, Chris Marks presented the Telstra & Rural Business Support Rural Journalist of the Year Award.

"Like Telstra, journalists play an essential role in helping keep regional communities connected.

"Despite the pressure for journalists to deliver quality stories across a variety of media as quickly as possible, this year's entries were of a very high standard and continue to demonstrate the number of interesting rural stories that happen each day across South Australia.

"We are proud to be a long-term supporter of these rural journalism awards," Chris Marks said.

Matt Turner has had extensive photographic experience, initially working freelance with the Stock Journal, The Australian, The Sydney Telegraph & Getty Images before returning to Adelaide in 2003 to join News Corp Australia. Since then he has worked with The Advertiser, SA Weekend Magazine and Nationally, covering a wide and varied range of major and every day events.

Rural Business Support's Chief Executive Officer, Brett Smith presented the award to Matt Turner.

"Rural Business Support is proud to support rural and regional media in its presentation of agriculture as a significant part of this state's economy and a viable industry for future generations. This year's finalists certainly have succeeded in achieving this.

"Regional journalists and photographers are working hard to present agriculture in a positive light. This matches our core belief at RBS – to support agricultural businesses to maximise the opportunities available to them now, and be well positioned to make the most of the good times ahead.

"We congratulate and thank all of the award entrants for ensuring that agriculture's good news stories, whether they be published, posted or aired, are told with impact and meaning."

RMSA President Ian Doyle thanked Telstra for its significant and continuous support as a major sponsor of these awards for the past 22 years and Rural Business Support for its joint major sponsorship for the last five years. This has allowed the expanded recognition of high achievement across all forms of rural media to continue.

He also paid recognition to Primary Industries and Regions SA, Fuller, South Australian Horticultural Services, the Royal Agricultural & Horticultural Society, AgCommunicators and Superior Selections for their valued supporting sponsorship in making these awards possible.

The journalists and photographers were asked to submit a portfolio of their work, published, broadcast, or posted in the 12 months to October 31st 2017.

As in past years, through the generous sponsorship of the Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society of South Australia, special awards for the best Adelaide Show story and photograph were presented. These were won by Elizabeth Anderson, Fairfax Media at the Stock Journal and News Corp's Matt Turner respectively.

An award for the Best Rural/Regional Print Journalist was again presented as a special incentive and recognition of the difficulty small regional publications and their staff face when competing against the resources of bigger media corporations. This year that award went to Les Pearson from The Plains Producer based at Balaklava.

"Regionally based journalists have a unique opportunity to develop a wide range of skills. Many of our major award winners started their careers in regional SA. This is an area of the awards we have grown to record levels this year, but we'd like to grow even more, so again, I strongly encourage even greater participation next year," Ian Doyle said.

Along similar lines, an award was presented for the best photography portfolio from a rural journalist who is also required to take photographs to support their stories. Photographers are often underrated in their ability to give powerful imagery to support a story, so when journalists also master this skill it deserves to be recognised. The winner of this award was Stephanie Thompson from the Loxton News.

"With the various sub-sections for both journalism and photography including growth of on-line entries, it is good to see a range of high standard entrants receiving due recognition. As is our objective, the judges had great difficulty in separating the winners from the record entries received in both categories that were of such high standard," Ian Doyle said.

2017 Telstra & Rural Business Support Rural Media Awards Results

Rural Journalism

2017 Best Regional Print Rural Journalist Award

Supported by Rural Media SA

Winner: Les Pearson – Plains Producer
Highly Commended: Paul Mitchell – Murray Pioneer
Highly Commended: Peri Strathearn – Murray Valley Standard

2017 Best Rural Print Journalist Award

Supported by Fuller

Winner: Belinda Willis – News Corp - The Advertiser
Highly Commended: Sandra Morello – Border Watch

2017 Best Rural Radio Journalist Award

Supported by SA Horticultural Services

Winner: Tom Nancarrow (ABC Rural)
Highly Commended: Courtney Fowler (ABC Rural)

2017 Best Rural Television Journalist Award

Sponsored by Telstra

Winner: Prue Adams (ABC Television - Landline)
Highly Commended: Brittany Evins (ABC News)

2017 Best Rural On-line Journalist Award

Sponsored by Telstra

Winner: Marty McCarthy (ABC Rural)
Highly Commended: Elizabeth Anderson (Fairfax - Stock Journal)

2017 Telstra & Rural Business Support Rural Journalist of the Year

Sponsored by Telstra

Winner: Belinda Willis – News Corp - The Advertiser

About the Winner:

Having grown up in the Riverland on a citrus and grape property, Belinda She has a love of the sense of community in our country regions and has a keen interest in uncovering the many untold stories about their successes, challenges and their local personalities. She is currently The Advertiser Newspaper's Rural Editor, overseeing the coverage of issues affecting rural businesses and communities across the state. Her career spans more than 20 years and includes stints with the BBC, Discovery Networks and the North West Evening Mail in England, the former Times Tribune Newspaper in California and a former Australian Federal Environment Minister.

Judges' Comments:

The quality of Belinda Willis's journalism blitzed the field. Her work tended to be quite edgy, was investigative, well written and diverse in content. She had an obvious grasp and insight to rural business and big-picture thinking, leading many of her rural stories to be published in the company of hard-hitting business affairs. As a rural journalist, Belinda obviously put in the effort to qualify stories with numerous sources, backed up by technical detail and expert comment.

Photography

2017 Best Regional Print Rural Photojournalist

Sponsored by AgCommunicators & Superior Selections

Winner: Stephanie Thompson (Loxton News)
Highly Commended: Ali Kuchel (Fairfax – Stock Journal)
Commended: Elizabeth Anderson (Fairfax – Stock Journal)

2017 Best Rural Photographer – Production Award

Supported by PIRSA

Winner: Tricia Watkinson (News Corp – The Advertiser & Sunday Mail)
Highly Commended: Tait Schmaal (News Corp – The Advertiser)
Commended: Tony Hill (ABC Landline)
Ali Kuchel (Fairfax – Stock Journal)

2017 Best Rural Photographer – People Award

Sponsored by Rural Business Support

Winner: Matt Turner (News Corp – SA Weekend Magazine & The Advertiser)
Highly Commended: James Elsby (Freelance - The Australian & Messenger Newspapers)
Tait Schmaal (News Corp – The Advertiser)

2017 Best Rural Photographer – Nature/Landscape Award

Sponsored by Rural Business Support

Winner: Matt Turner (News Corp – SA Weekend Magazine & The Advertiser)
Highly Commended: Tony Hill (ABC Landline)

2017 Telstra & Rural Business Support Rural Photographer of the Year

Sponsored by Rural Business Support

Winner: Matt Turner (News Corp – Weekend Magazine & The Advertiser)

About the Winner:

Matt Turner has had extensive photographic experience, initially working freelance with the Stock Journal, The Australian, The Sydney Telegraph & Getty Images before returning to Adelaide in 2003 to join News Corp Australia. Since then he has worked with The Advertiser, SA Weekend Magazine and Nationally, covering a wide and varied range of major and every day events.

Judges' Comments:

The judges assessed Matt's 8 photos entered in 3 categories as the standout portfolio in an exceptionally high standard competition. Without knowledge of who submitted each entry in the different categories, they chose Matt's entries as winners in each of the 3 categories he entered; Show photo, People & Nature Landscape. The consistent technical excellence, including sharpness and especially lighting, plus the composition, impact and engagement was exceptional, while the obvious effort and attention to detail to get the right shot for the stories concerned shone through.

2017 Best Adelaide Show Story Award

Sponsored by RA&HS Education Foundation

Winner: Elizabeth Anderson (Fairfax – Stock Journal)

About the Winner:

Elizabeth Anderson's winning story about the 2017 Royal Adelaide Show was an online piece posted on the Stock Journal website. It warmly described the wonderful initiative by Dairy Australia to have "*Legendairy Ambassadors*" present in the Dairy Pavilion throughout the Royal Show. There was no doubt that in its own right, this "*Legendairy*" initiative could have itself, taken out an award for innovative communication.

However Elizabeth Anderson didn't receive our Best Show Story award for the "*Legendairy*" initiative. Her contribution was to be sufficiently savvy to recognise "*Legendairy Ambassadors*" as being a good subject to spend her time developing in order to feature the 2017 Royal Adelaide Show. Elizabeth displayed considerable journalistic skill in capturing the key essence of the initiative – "*That by providing tours of the Dairy Pavilion, city-based people would then be able to discover a little more about where their food came from.*"

She captured the fact that the young volunteer local dairy farmers conducting the "*Legendairy*" tours would also benefit personally through self-development and engaging with the wider community. Elizabeth's online story did a lot to showcase the 2017 Royal Adelaide Show as being a place where cows were happy & friendly, the environment was clean and the dairy industry representatives were well respected by all.

2017 Best Adelaide Show Photograph Award

Sponsored by RA&HS Education Foundation

Winner: Matt Turner (News Corp – The Advertiser)
Highly Commended: Tait Schmaal (News Corp – The Advertiser)

About the Winner:

Matt Turner's winning image is of Emily Hillier, 15 months and Markus Huser, 3, with showbags at the Royal Adelaide Showground. It came out of what was supposed to be a champion sheepdog leaping over kids with showbags.

On paper that sounded perfect; the reality was the true meaning of 'you should never work with kids and animals'. As everyone's patience was being tested Matt thought he'd break things up by letting the kids go for a run around. During this time, he snapped the winning image.

As it turned out, after the run around the original concept shot worked so he got two prints that were published on consecutive days. *(This latter image was also highly ranked by the judges in the final assessment).*

The judges felt that while the winning image depicts 'Showbags & Entertainment' over the Rural aspect of the Adelaide show, the technical quality and composition of the image was exceptional, and it clearly promoted the Adelaide Show, while also conveying the story of the show as a place to be for fun and excitement for all the family.

Rural Journalist Awards – Judging Panel Comments

Best Rural Journalist – Regional Print: Les Pearson (Plains Producer)

About the Winner:

This category attracted the largest number of entries in the years it had been awarded and the standard of stories proved that over-worked regionally based print journalists could produce stories the equal of their city counterparts.

Les Pearson's portfolio of work won out in a very close competition with the Murray Valley Standard's Peri Strathearn. This comment does not take anything away from Les's stories, but rather it highlights the very high standard of competition he had to face.

Les grew up on a grain and sheep farm on Eyre Peninsula, attending and graduating at Cleve Area School in 2005 and started his journalistic career as a cadet with the Whyalla News in 2006. He then worked as a journalist for the Riverland Weekly, a now-defunct free newspaper distributed across the Riverland.

He has worked at the Plains Producer, based in Balaklava for four years, taking over the Editor's role in March 2014. He has a strong interest in agriculture, sport, health and political reporting, but as with most regional journalism roles, he has covered a wide range of rounds and topics, from health, police and agriculture, to motoring, sport and all levels of politics and government.

In 2011 he was recognised with a National Press Club of Australia award for my coverage of an Indigenous Health series and at the 2013 RMSA Media Awards he was also the winner of this same regional print journalism award.

In a publishing environment where the pressure was on to primarily focus stories on issues affecting regional town populations, the judges said Les successfully managed to weave into his regional stories how the rural sector fared. In particular, his story on power price hikes was very strategic in using the poultry farming industry as the key example of how changes impacted the general community. The Judging Panel felt Les Pearson's journalism was of a very high standard.

Best Rural Journalist –Print: Belinda Willis (News Corp – The Advertiser)

About the Winner:

Belinda Willis is currently The Advertiser Newspaper's Rural Editor, overseeing the coverage of issues affecting rural businesses and communities across the state. Her career spans more than 20 years and includes stints with the BBC, Discovery Networks and the North West Evening Mail in England, the former Times Tribune Newspaper in California and a former Australian Federal Environment Minister. Past awards include being highly commended in the best suburban, country or rural report in the prestigious national Walkley Awards, a Catholic Archbishop of Adelaide media citation, plus various other awards for journalism in England and Australia.

She has completed honours subjects in environmental studies through Nottingham University in the United Kingdom, and has worked for several newspapers and magazines in Victoria.

The Judging Panel was unanimous in awarding Belinda Willis's portfolio of three rural stories the highest score in this hard-fought award category. Her stories were investigative, well written and diverse in content. They all had a hard-edge to them and reflected good insight to rural business and big-picture thinking. Importantly, in each of her stories it was obvious that Belinda had put in the hard yards to track down numerous sources of technical opinion and expert input. Her journalism was far from being pedestrian and achieved the ultimate objective of communicating important rural stories to non-traditional urban audiences.

Best Rural Journalist – Radio: Tom Nancarrow (ABC Rural)

About the Winner:

Tom has been the Rural Reporter with ABC Riverland for 18 months, having moved up to the region from Adelaide in April 2016. Post university, he never anticipated a career in rural journalism until the opportunity presented itself. Despite his family owning a fruit block on the Riverland's outskirts throughout his childhood, it was not until a regional placement in Mount Gambier that he became directly aware of the important role of journalists to audiences in regional communities.

He commenced his career writing for a construction company based in Adelaide, which while offering a terrific learning experience, deprived him of the creativity journalists crave. He jumped at the opportunity to join the ABC team early last year, and has since enjoyed what he describes as easily the most memorable experience of his working life. While taking countless hours of research to get up to speed with farm life, he quickly became entrenched with the affairs impacting his local community, and now thrives on the opportunity to offer a daily voice to both rural and city-based audiences.

Every day he is proud to represent the ABC and the local Riverland community he serves. Whether it be through the morning Rural Report, storytelling on the Country Hour or creating national agricultural content online, he now attests to the mantra that regional journalists truly have the best jobs on offer in Australia.

The judges thought Tom Nancarrow's radio stories displayed an ability to be quite creative in terms of journalism style, without watering down the core message or overall impact. His portfolio of three stories was diverse in content, ranging from an extremely investigative piece examining the irrigation water sector, to a general human interest story on the survival of a local hotel in a rural settlement of only ten residents.

The Judging Panel felt that despite still being in the early part of his career as a rural journalist, Tom Nancarrow possessed considerable natural talent and confidence. His career path from now will be one to watch.

Best Rural Journalist – Television: Prue Adams (ABC Television - Landline)

About the Winner:

Prue Adams is a senior journalist, who has worked for ABC-TV's Landline program for 21 years. She started her career in Mount Gambier at TV station SES 8, before travelling and working in the USA and UK. She returned to the ABC Adelaide television newsroom in 1989 and filled a variety of positions from News Presenter, to News Chief-of-Staff to 7:30 Report reporter. She has been awarded SA Rural Media Association Rural Journalist of the Year three times (1997, 2008 and 2015). She was also named SA Journalist of the Year (SA Press Club 2011) for breaking a story on animal cruelty at the University-owned Mataranka Station in the NT. The following year, Prue was announced as South Australia's Best TV Broadcaster (SA Media Awards 2012). In 2016, she was awarded the title of International Agricultural Journalist of the Year at the IFAJ conference in Germany, for a ground-breaking television piece on Q Fever.

If you took away all the technology and resources normally available to a television magazine journalist, Prue Adams would still be a class act. This was the impression gained by the Judging Panel after assessing Prue's portfolio of three long-form television stories.

Behind the facade of this highly visual medium, there was solid evidence of genuine excellence in journalism. The Judging Panel would have expected no less from someone who was generally viewed by many as now being the matriarch of rural journalism in this country.

With those high expectations, the judging process was no doubt a little tougher on Prue's work than that of others. Nevertheless, Prue's personal talent and professional skill came through as being the very best amongst quite a talented group of entrants in this award category. Her stories were investigative, informative, entertaining and well structured.

Best Rural Journalist – On-line: Marty McCarthy (ABC Rural)

About the Winner:

Marty McCarthy is a regional and rural reporter for the ABC, and is currently the acting presenter of the South Australian Country Hour. Prior to this he was the ABC's rural reporter on Queensland's Sunshine Coast and also in Townsville.

In 2016 he was selected as the ABC's Andrew Olle scholar, and used this opportunity to work for the ABC's National Reporting Team and Landline. Marty was Queensland Rural Journalist of the year in 2015, also winning the television category in the 2017 International Federation of Agriculture Journalists Awards.

Marty's stories entered in these awards focussed on biosecurity, which is one of his areas of interest, as well as regional politics. He was born in Adelaide and is passionate about promoting the nation's agricultural industries and improving opportunities for regional Australians.

The judging panel thought although the incorporation of audio, print and photographic images into Marty McCarthy's portfolio of online stories displayed good presentation style, it was his insightful investigative journalism ability that really impressed them.

In collecting his stories, Marty McCarthy battled personal abuse from national wool industry leader Wal Merriman and had to penetrate the inner political sanctum to source the real story on genetically modified crops and water theft cover-ups.

Being presented via a medium able to be instantly accessed from anywhere in the world, the relevance of Marty McCarthy's online stories held up to scrutiny irrespective of audience location.

Rural Photography Awards – Judging Panel Comments

Best Rural/Regional Photojournalist: Stephanie Thompson (Taylor Group – Loxton News)

About the Winner:

Stephanie Thompson is a young and passionate rural journalist, situated in Loxton, with a love of rural issues and photography, with her work dominating the front pages of *The Loxton News* in recent years.

In 2017 at the age of 25, Stephanie was permanently promoted to editor of *The Loxton News*, which was awarded the Best Country Newspaper in its category at the SA Country Press Awards this year.

While many journalists and newspaper photographers choose to shoot with their talent looking straight down the barrel, Stephanie has begun taking shots that are less set-up than typical newspaper shots, showing confidence in her photography as demonstrated in her entry.

The judges were impressed with the consistent quality of the Stephanie's three photos, covering a range of different subjects and emotions. Clearly without the benefit of the high technical equipment available to some fully professional photographers, Stephanie has shown a high degree of ability to compose and frame her shots to bring out the central theme to enhance her stories. They show a strong understanding of important issues and the people that make up her community, as well as a high degree of photographic ability.

Best Rural Photographer Awards – Production: Tricia Watkinson (News Corp - The Advertiser & Sunday Mail)

About the Winner:

Tricia started her career with The Advertiser in 1992 as an Editorial Messenger. She always loved photography, but it wasn't until she started with the company that she realised the incredible potential to work in the exciting field of press photography. This, she furiously set out to gain as much photographic experience as possible. Her rostered days off were spent gaining valuable knowledge from the incredibly talented pool of photographers and after 18 months she was fortunate enough to be awarded a 3yr photographic cadetship.

In 1998 Tricia was granted an overseas posting, working for The Times newspaper in London, for 4 months. After 15 years as a daily photographer with The Advertiser she was promoted to the position of Sunday Mail Picture Editor which she successfully held for almost four years. Her current position is Senior Photographer with The Advertiser and Sunday Mail.

The judges felt this entry from Tricia Watkinson was the outstanding portfolio in this category. The technical excellence of all three shots was spot on; the thought and effort in their creation was outstanding, and the quality of composition being exceptional. The emotional impact of the first two was more than matched by the perfect balance of all the elements in the third shot.

Best Rural Photographer Awards – People: Matt Turner (News Corp – SA Weekend Magazine & The Advertiser)

About the Winner:

Matt started with News Ltd as a copy person in 1986 at the Adelaide News until its demise in 1992.

He then worked extensively as a freelance photographer with the Stock Journal and the Australian newspaper. He moved to Sydney in 1999 where he worked with Getty Images during the Olympic Games.

He followed the Australasian PGA Golf tour for a year working in Singapore and Malaysia and covering a wide range of events across Australia. In 2001 he joined the Sunday Telegraph in Sydney where he covered many news events on the East Coast and in Canberra.

Since his return to Adelaide in 2003 he has worked with The Advertiser, SA Weekend Magazine and Nationally for News Corp Australia. In that time he has covered Commonwealth Games Melbourne 2006, the Black Saturday Bushfires in Victoria 2009, the Queensland Floods 2010, Banda Aceh 10 year anniversary of the Tsunami in Sumatra 2014 along with many other events across Australia.

In an extremely well contested category with 14 entries, the judges had a very difficult job, but it was the consistent high technical standard and emotional impact of all three of Matt's images that swayed the decision in his favour.

The standout feature from the judges' perspective was the lighting. Whereas many images are improved with the use of brighter lighting, these 3 are making greater use of natural light and the ambience created with the sun lower in the skyline, a time of the day when many photographers have packed up for the day, or not yet started. The fading light in the first image sets a romantic scene, thus enhancing the story on B & S Balls it accompanied; the second image using natural low sunlight, or some subtle enhancement to highlight the faces of this farming family in a relaxed and natural pose made it one of the judges' absolute standout images in the whole competition; while the third is using backlighting to enhance the author and her horse and bring out the emotion in the bond that clearly exists.

Best Rural Photographer Awards – Nature/Landscape: Matt Turner (News Corp – SA Weekend Magazine)

About the Winner:

The judges felt the consistent high technical quality and composition of each photo in this portfolio carried it into the winning position. Again, beautiful lighting and tones are a feature. The first image is particularly powerful and impacting for its overall quality with some highlighting light on the key subjects; the second rightly has more focus on the bird and appears to be using just natural light; and the third one again is naturally lit and has more of a focus on the bird than the person.

This portfolio was taken to support a story on the business, which features both people and birds (nature); the judges believing that the balance of those two elements has been achieved exceptionally well, with still a strong featuring of the birds from a nature perspective.