



Rural Press Club of Victoria President's report for 2021–22 by Bryce Eishold

The easing of COVID-19 restrictions in 2021/22 allowed for a return of several key events on the Rural Press Club of Victoria's calendar.

Most notably in September, the RPCV held its first in-person journalism and photography awards night in three years.

The event was attended by more than 100 people and held in Ballarat, the first time in memory it was staged in regional Victoria.

Perhaps one of the most significant moments of the evening was the RPCV life membership awarded to veteran journalist, former committee member and awards judge, Anne Burgi.

Anne is just one of three life members, joining Sue Davies and Derek Jones, to hold the club's most prestigious title.

The club opted to move the event to regional Victoria to support hospitality businesses in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I'm pleased to report each one of the club's nine gold and silver sponsors supported the decision to move the event - which attracted 240 entries from across Victoria and Tasmania - to a regional Victoria community.

A survey of people who attended the awards night in Ballarat found 77 per cent of respondents would be more likely to attend a future awards event if it was held in a regional Victorian city, as opposed to 22pc of respondents who would prefer to attend a Melbourne-based event.

Another notable event for the RPCV was a luncheon with Premier Daniel Andrews at the State Library of Victoria.

More than 120 club members, sponsors and supporters heard Mr Andrews speak on issues important to rural and regional Victorians.

The event was emceed by former RPCV Ray Frawley Young Journalist of the Year and ABC Victorian state political reporter, Bridget Rollason.

Furthermore, I'd like to recognise the club's loyal gold sponsors; Agriculture Victoria and Telstra, along with silver sponsors Marcus Oldham College, the Transport Accident Commission, Currie Communications, the Victorian Farmers Federation, The Weekly Times and Stock & Land.

I'd also like to welcome leading commercial real estate brokerage firm CBRE which joined the club as a gold sponsor in 2022.

The club also utilised lessons learned during the pandemic and hosted a court reporting webinar and Q&A online.

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The event featured an expert panel, including Justice Richard Niall, SC, criminal lawyer and prosecutor Sally Flynn, QC, and decorated journalist Tammy Mills from The Age.

The interactive 90-minute event, moderated by RPCV committee member Greg Dundas, included a broad range of topics and questions from regionally-based journalists, and offered something for everyone, from an experienced court reporter to an enthusiastic cadet journalist.

Throughout the year, the club offered several other professional development workshops as well as networking events in Gippsland, Geelong and Horsham. We will look to expand these events to other regions in 2023.

In closing, I would like to thank each of the club's committee members for their tireless work and dedication to the club over the last 12 months.

I'd especially like to recognise the contribution of Laura Jade, who after several years as treasurer, is stepping aside and moving into a general committee role.

Laura joined the RPCV committee in 2017 and has previously served as the club's secretary.

Laura's dedication to the club, along with her financial diligence and passion for rural and regional journalism, will leave a significant void to fill on the executive committee.

In closing, I thank the members who continue to support the club.

As a club run by volunteers, we attempt to offer interesting, beneficial and rewarding experiences to our members across Victoria and Tasmania, and look forward to continuing that proud tradition in 2023.

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