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# Rural Press Club of Victoria President’s report for 2022-23 by Bryce Eishold

The Rural Press Club of Victoria experienced strong growth on a number of fronts in 2022-23, including gaining new sponsors and members, hosting a range of events across the state, and the expansion of the club’s committee.

On average, the club held one industry-related event each month, ranging from agribusiness breakfasts with the likes of the Federal Agriculture Minister Murray Watt to the club’s prestigious Rural and Regional Journalism and Photography Awards which attracted more than 130 people.

This year, the club received 362 award nominations, a 48 per cent increase compared to 2022.

Those nominations came from 65 newsrooms across Victoria and Tasmania, which included the work of 127 journalists and 26 photographers.

A post-event survey by those who attended the Geelong event indicated an overwhelming desire to keep the event in regional Victoria, following the 2021-22 awards in Ballarat last year.

Another feature event was the return of the Young Journalist Forum in Melbourne with more than 35 young and emerging journalists and photographers across the state.

The event heard from several prominent journalists including ABC Victorian state political reporter and former RPCV Ray Frawley Young Journalist of the Year Bridget Rollason, 7 News crime journalist Cassie Zervos, 3AW police reporter Pat Mitchell, Herald Sun food and wine editor Kara Monssen, and The Weekly Times reporter Alex Sinnott.

The forum gave attendees, the industry’s next crop of journalists, practical experience about how to cover breaking news and how to land your first job in journalism.

In another event, the club hosted Victoria's chief veterinary officer Graeme Cooke as part of a discussion about reporting on emergency animal disease outbreaks.

The webinar was attended by journalists, media professionals, and agribusiness leaders from across Victoria and interstate, and was moderated by ABC Rural reporter Jane McNaughton.

From a sponsorship perspective, the club grew its partnerships portfolio and welcomed the Regional Angel Investor Network on board as a silver sponsor, as well as GMHBA as an awards partner.

In total, the club boasts 18 sponsors ranging across the gold, silver and award levels.

The club’s gold sponsors include Agriculture Victoria, the Transport Accident Commission and CBRE, along with silver sponsors Currie Communications, Marcus Oldham College, the Weekly Times, Stock & Land, Victorian Farmers Federation, and RAIN.

The support of these sponsors is critical to the success of our club, and ensures we can continue to run relevant and informative events to our membership and broader media industry.

Membership grew exponentially in the 2022-23, up 79 per cent.

This included 129 members, in comparison with 72 members at the same time last year.

The club welcomed three new committee members in 2022-23, including Peter Somerville from Currie Communications, Kellie Lazzaro from ABC News, and Sonja Heydeman from the Digital News Academy at Melbourne Business School.

The committee, which included Greg Dundas as vice president, Nicole Cairns as secretary and Alannah Halloran as treasurer, along with executive members Rex Martinich, Laura Jade, Alex Sinnott, Sue Neales, David Goodfellow and Max O'Driscoll worked diligently for the club in 2022-23.

Each of these members contributed to ensuring the club’s success and I thank them for their time.

On a personal note, I would like to recognise the work of long-term committee member Laura Jade who has advised she will not recontest her position on the RPCV committee in 2023-24.

Laura joined the committee in 2017 and served as treasurer for four of those years. I’d like to wish Laura all the best for her future endeavours and recognise her genuine contribution to the club.