ACPA AWARDS 2026

Category 1: Best News Content

Winner: The Catholic Leader
Title: IVF mix-up puts spotlight on 'wild west' fertility industry by Joe Higgins

This entry tackles a complex and highly sensitive issue with professionalism, balance and strong public interest value. Rather than stopping at the incident itself, it situates a major clinic error within the wider debate on regulation, accountability and bioethics. An outstanding example of faith-informed journalism that is timely, informative and impactful.

Runner-up: The Catholic Weekly
Title: "Antisemitism 'must stop,' says Archbishop Fisher OP following deadly Bondi Beach shootings" by Marilyn Rodrigues

Timely, compassionate coverage that captures both the human suffering caused by the Bondi Beach attack and the broader implications of rising antisemitism. Clear reporting and strong sourcing convey the responses of religious and civic leaders alongside calls for unity across faith communities. A powerful example of journalism that both informs and consoles in a time of grief.

Category 2: Best Feature Content

Winner: The Catholic Leader
Title: "Rural town welcomed Pope Leo" by Kymberlee Gomes

Every masthead in the world covered the election of Pope Leo XIV, and Gomes found the one story only an Australian Catholic newspaper could tell, that in December 2005 the future Pope spent a night in Mareeba. Twenty years on she tracked down three people who sat at that table and let them talk, from the didgeridoo at the start of the meal to the sing-alongs of Waltzing Matilda. Generous, original and beautifully sourced.

Runner-up: Aurora
Title: "After the Rain", 2025 Manning region flood coverage

Aurora went back to the Manning Valley in July, two months after the floods, when every other camera had long gone home. Recovery is the harder story to tell and the one a community actually lives through, and this entry commits to it in the most ambitious format in the category, a short documentary produced in house. A reminder that a diocesan masthead can be more than a page of text.

Category 3: Best Editorial, Column or Blog

Winner: The Catholic Weekly
Title: "Pope Francis and preaching to the choir"
"The cult is in the eye of the beholder" and
"Celebrating women as women" by Monica Doumit

Doumit combines faithful reflection on Church teaching with thoughtful analysis of modern debates, presenting nuanced arguments with balance, conviction and intellectual depth. Complex issues are explained in a way that invites reflection rather than division. The three pieces work together cohesively, showing originality of thought and a consistent, authentic voice.

Runner-up: Melbourne Catholic
Title: "Tonka trucks and trusting God", "Tongues of angels: a reflection" and "The power of humble service" by Lucy Davison

A thoughtful and spiritually rich collection that illustrates the relevance of Christian faith in everyday life. Davison connects profound theological truths with ordinary human experience, so that children sharing Tonka trucks becomes a way into deeper truths about faith and relationships. An entry that speaks with authenticity, insight and hope.

Category 4: Best Headline

Winner: The Catholic Leader
Title: "The Nightingales sing of the beauty of marriage" by Joe Higgins

The rarest thing in headline writing, a pun on a surname that earns its place rather than showing off. Judy and Tony Nightingale have been married 52 years, and turning their name into a verb gives the page a lift of delight before the reader has touched the copy. Clever, generous and entirely without cynicism.

Runner-up: The Majellan
Title: "A closing brings a new opening"

Six words holding a paradox, set in white across a full-page photograph of the Holy Door in St Peter's. The line reads first as simple reporting, then turns as the reader notices a door about to be sealed that the Church only ever seals in order to open again. Headline and layout working as one decision rather than two.

Category 5: Best Content, Climate and Environment

Winner: The Southern Cross
Title: "Focus on fragile creation" by Jenny Brinkworth

The algal bloom was the biggest environmental story in the country last year, and Brinkworth runs it straight into the Season of Creation and the tenth anniversary of *Laudato Si'* without forcing the join. She went and got the story, with student eco leaders, the Archdiocesan Council for Integral Ecology, four parish ecology groups and the pre-settlement dune history that gives the piece depth. School, parish, archdiocese and liturgy all appear, and readers leave with something they can actually do.

Highly Commended: Eureka Street
Title: "Who owns the future of Antarctica?" by Jessica T Miskelly

The best-researched piece in the field by a wide margin, moving from the 1959 Antarctic Treaty through recent geopolitical activity in the region and cuts to Antarctic science funding. Written by a meteorologist, the science holds up and the argument is sustained throughout. A serious piece of environmental journalism.

Category 6: Best Content, Social Justice

Winner: Catholic Outlook
Title: "The Shed: Healing, culture and brotherhood in Emerton" by Belinda Gadd

Gadd went to Holy Family Parish in Emerton and stayed long enough to earn the material, opening in the yard on a Wednesday with steak on the barbecue and Uncle Donald Mulholland welcoming men with shoulder pats and jokes. The story is anchored in Aboriginal male suicide prevention and closes on funding and the search for longevity. It puts First Nations voices in charge of their own story, with the parish as the ground rather than the hero.

Highly Commended: Common Home TV —
Title: "Interfaith Dialogue Amid War and Trauma"

The bravest sourcing of anything submitted in this category, with Br Peter Bray, Israeli Jewish peace educator Hanna Bendcowsky and Sami El-Yousef of the Latin Patriarchate. Placing an Israeli Jewish voice in the same series as Palestinian Christian voices is an editorial choice most outlets would not make. Ambitious work on the hardest justice story in the world.

Category 7: Best Content, Education

Winner: Horizons, Diocese of Toowoomba
Title: "The 10 lessons that form the legacy of McAuley House" by Jessica Wade

McAuley House Boarding closed at the end of 2025 after more than a century, and Wade refuses to write the obituary anyone would expect, distilling instead what the place taught into ten lessons that are earned rather than asserted. The honesty is the making of it, naming the harsh boundaries, the dawn Masses and the proud tradition of arguing about hairstyles, and still landing on Catherine McAuley's call to do the ordinary extraordinarily well. Handsomely presented, with archival photographs carrying the reader down to the final twenty-four boarders.

Runner-up: Melbourne Catholic
Title: "'He just loves life': students see elderly through new eyes"

Reporting from inside the room, a lounge at Mercy Place Wyndham where a thousand years of experience is gathered in front of the visiting students. The story explains the accompaniment program clearly, then gets out of the way and lets the Year 12s from Good News Lutheran College tell it. Warm, generous and properly photographed, making the case for intergenerational learning without once arguing for it.

Category 8: Best Content, Faith Formation

Winner: Australian Jesuits
Title: "Epiphany in the desert" by Joshua Choong SJ

A writer wrestles with the implications of his faith in Jesus as he walks in the footsteps of migrants. This is writing that takes the religious impulse seriously. Congratulations to Joshua Choong SJ.

Runner-up: Melbourne Catholic
Title: "Love, urgency and longing: thousands gather for Corpus Christi"

For coverage of annual events, it takes a certain spark and skill to make the familiar compelling. Congratulations to the writer and to Melbourne Catholic for bringing the why of such an event to the forefront.

Category 9: Best Content, Faith and Life

Winner: Fiona Basile, Associate Member
Title: "Living in hope: Sarah Kelly's brave journey with brain cancer"

A moving and deeply authentic portrayal of Christian faith lived in the midst of suffering. Rather than focusing solely on illness, the story highlights Sarah Kelly's trust in God, her commitment to helping others and her determination to live with purpose. Compassionate, richly human and a compelling witness to Christian hope.

Runner-up: Catholic Outlook
Title: "From South Sudan to Western Sydney, James is sustained by faith" by Isabell Petrinic

A powerful account of faith in action, tracing James Atanasious' journey from a South Sudanese refugee camp to a life of service and advocacy in Western Sydney. Warmly written and deeply personal, it connects one man's story with broader themes of compassion, social justice and human dignity. An uplifting reflection on the transformative power of faith.

Category 10: Best Content, Ecumenical and Interfaith

Winner: Eureka Street
Title: "We need to talk about anti-Judaism resurfacing in the Church" by Emma Carolan

An opinion piece that tackles a vexed issue in a sophisticated way. A well-written thing, demanding introspection. Congratulations to Emma Carolan and Eureka Street.

Runner-up: Bridges, Columban Mission Centre
Title: "From the editor: Borders" by Rev Dr Patrick McInerney

In the limited space allowed, this author packs a punch in his unabashed thoughts on an unfolding, man-made catastrophe. This is writing not so much to

be consumed as to be contended with. Congratulations to Fr McInerney and the Columbans.

Category 11: Best Content, Celebrating Cultural Expressions of Catholic Faith

Winner: Tui Motu InterIslands
Title: Migration and Changing Catholic Parishes by Robyn Andrews

Andrews is the only entrant who went and found something out rather than covering an event, drawing on years of fieldwork and interviews across three parishes among Filipino and South Indian migrants, long-standing Māori and Pākehā parishioners, and priests. The specificity wins it, from the Santo Niño de Cebú statue circulating through Filipino homes every nine days to kanji shared after a Good Friday cross procession. Publishing a mildly uncomfortable finding about the Church, in a series otherwise full of warmth, is exactly the confidence this category should reward.

Runner-up: Kete Kōrero
Title: "A celebration of unity, faith and hope in Rotorua"

Four pages, the most visually ambitious entry in the field, and the one that names cultural specifics rather than gesturing at diversity, from the Tokelauan enthroning of the Book of the Gospels to the Samoan taualuga at the offertory. Its best moment is a piece of genuine reporting, when Monsignor Trevor Murray asks who was born in New Zealand and a few hands go up, then asks who was born elsewhere and a sea of hands fills the church. A single gesture that does more work than three paragraphs of description.

Category 12: Best Original Photograph

Winner: Melbourne Catholic
Title: "Pilgrims carry cross in Melbourne's signature rainy weather" by Michael Wong

Melbourne turned on its worst weather for the pilgrimage walk, and Wong made the rain the picture rather than working around it. Three young women carry the cross between them, one laughing with her eyes screwed shut, another wincing under the weight, and what lifts it above a happy snap is that joy and burden sit in the same frame. It says more about young Australian Catholics in a Jubilee year than a page of copy could.

Runner-up: The Catholic Standard
Title": New Aussie cardinal hopeful for Ukraine" by Josh Low

The most technically accomplished photograph in the category, exposed for a single shaft of light across the Cardinal's face and vestments while two thirds of the frame falls away to black. The incense drifting through the picture balances the figure and gives the darkness somewhere to go, and that restraint is what makes it. It carries its story too, the world's youngest cardinal at prayer while the reporting alongside concerns a war.

Category 13: Best Original Artwork

Winner: Kete Kōrero
Title: "God Given Gifts"

Original artwork built to be used rather than admired, with a winding path across a double-page spread carrying a child from the Magi through hills, a forest and a Nativity. The fork in the road, hide my talents or share my talents, is a genuinely imaginative piece of visual catechesis, giving a child a choice to colour in rather than a lesson to absorb. Warm, generous and technically assured.

Runner-up: Tui Motu InterIslands
Title: "Ross Cemetery" by Catherine Brough, accompanying "Spirituality of Life After Death"

Loaded, gestural brushwork builds a West Coast burial ground out of blues, blacks and acid greens, with headstones leaning at the bottom of the frame. Nothing is prettified, and it carries exactly the weight Neil Darragh's essay needs. Run full bleed above the headline, the image does its work before a word is read.

Category 14: Best Front Page

Winner: Catholic Observer, Diocese of Bathurst
Title: Christmas 2025

The Aboriginal artwork of the Christmas star in the sky is simply beautiful and draws the reader in immediately. It is always hard to find the right image for a Christmas edition, and this publication has chosen the perfect one. Well done.

Runner-up: Broken Bay News
Title: May 2025

The image of Pope Leo in prayer is a beautiful choice for the cover of this commemorative edition, conveying gratitude as well as the overwhelming task ahead of this man. No words needed, just his name. Beautiful work.

Category 15: Best Layout and Design, Online

Winner: Common Home TV
Cleverly adopts the layout of high-profile streaming platforms. An exceptional example of how faith-related media can put those effective layouts to its own purposes.

Runner-up: CathEvents
A clear, effective layout that everyone can use.

Category 16: Best Layout and Design, Print

Winner: Horizons, Diocese of Toowoomba
Each issue has a familiarity and consistency, with photographs, graphics and space well balanced and a pastel palette that draws the eye without

overwhelming the reader. The high-quality photography shows a faith community in action, with a strong mix of local parish and school stories alongside global coverage such as the Pope's election. Congratulations.

Runner-up: Catholic Life, Diocese of Lismore
This publication takes the reader directly into the life of the faith community in the Diocese of Lismore, with a beautiful modern design that uses white space well. The stories are varied and the photographs convey real joy. Congratulations.

Category 17: Most Improved Publication, Print

Winner: Catholic Life, Diocese of Lismore
A standout winner. Catholic Life has had a complete overhaul after a hiatus, with brand new design, storytelling and photography, and the new version is genuinely full of life. Congratulations on turning this into something fresh and engaging, and a joy to read.

Runner-up: Broken Bay News
The Pope Leo commemorative edition in particular showcased BBN's new direction, with beautiful photography, splashes of colour in the headlines and a fine balance of text and images. Across the other editions the storytelling and photography were of a higher quality throughout. Well done.

Category 18: Best Use of Digital Media

Winner: Melbourne Catholic (Coverage of the 2025 Australian Catholic Youth Festival)
Recognised not just for the quality of the posts but for the comprehensive effort behind them. Content produced was compelling, even electrifying.

Runner-up: Common Home TV
A commendably broad range of topics and ideas, with a user-friendly layout. The focus on digital-friendly short-form video suits current consumption trends well.

Category 19: Best Advertising Feature or Supplement, Print

Winner: The Record Magazine
Title: Issue 50, December 2025

Beautiful photography, clean and functional design, and content that is never far from its intended target. Bravo to The Record.

Runner-up: The Catholic Weekly
Title: "A Tribute to Pope Francis"

With an impressive list of contributors, The Catholic Weekly provided a compelling package for advertisers and readers alike in its supplement marking the death of Pope Francis. Well done on a considerable achievement.

BISHOP PHILIP KENNEDY MEMORIAL AWARD FOR OVERALL EXCELLENCE

Winner: Broken Bay News, Diocese of Broken Bay
BBNews has the most disciplined design system in the field, and the interiors hold that standard with proper headline hierarchy, generous picture use and section furniture that genuinely helps navigation.

The May Commemorative Edition is the argument: Francis died on Easter Monday, Leo was elected three weeks later, and a team of two turned a full edition around inside a fortnight, ran an enlarged print run and had it signed by Pope Leo himself. Topicality, professionalism and service to the audience in a single artefact.