

It was fifty years ago ...

It is a melancholy task closing an organisation, but it can also be illuminating and fascinating, particularly when the records are concerned. The Australasian Religious Press Association held its final Conference in September 2024, and was only recently deregistered after a somewhat laborious process. I think it was far easier to set an organisation up in 1974 than to close in 2024.

As the custodian of the archives I have been preparing these important records for hopefully a longer life, and it has been enriching to read about the service and witness of ARPA and its member publications particularly in the early decades. The inaugural copy of the internal *ARPA Bulletin* has a wonderful photo of the first President Bruce Upton providing a suitable bow as he welcomed the then Governor-General Sir Paul Hasluck to the first ARPA convention aptly held in Canberra in 1974.

One small document that secured my early focus was 'The best religious journalism of 1975', outlining the winners of the ARPA awards for 1975. This was the second year, and the award categories were still developing. At the final awards in 2021, there were nearly three times the number of categories. In examining the winning entries of 1975, four factors stood out.

1. They were all from print publications. Not surprising given the time, and ARPA's logo is an image of Johannes Gutenberg (pictured in the awards document).
2. Award entries were mainly denominational focussed and the editors were male, except for *Christian Woman* and probably *Mia Mia*.
3. Some publications have ceased or been re-named, though a handful continue to this day with the same name. A small group have continued to print, though most are now on-line. The Methodist publications denoted this was before the Uniting Church union, and the adoption of new names.
4. 1975 had seen significant Australian and international events and many of these were covered by church publications, highlighted by the contributions that received awards.

Best Story on Social Justice: 'The Aurukun Affair' (the approval of mining by the Queensland Government).


Best Piece of Reporting: 'How We Fled Timor – Nuns' (the story of 25 Canossian Nuns who left Dili by cargo ship and RAAF plane and their arrival in Australia).

Best Editorial: 'For Whom The Bell Tolls' (on the end of the Vietnam War and the fall of Saigon).

Best Feature: 'Noise Maker for God' (Rev. Joshua Daimoi's installation as the first National Executive Secretary of the newly independent Bible Society of Papua New Guinea in the year of independence for PNG).

I recognised quite a few names among the authors and also ARPA members, including some who continued to be actively involved in Christian media and wider service well into the 2000s. You may know or have heard of some of the awardees and publications as well?

I am hoping that I will discover more items of interest along the way of removing staples and sorting.



The best religious journalism of 1975

BEST PIECE OF REPORTING HOW WE FLED TIMOR — NUNS by Richard Schmeizl. The Advocate, Melbourne.	BEST EDITORIAL (Newspaper) TIME TO STUDY BISHOPS' MARRIAGE IDEAS. The Advocate.	VIETNAMESE CHILDREN. Mia Mia by Nan Bosler.
BEST FEATURE NOISE MAKER FOR GOD by Ken Harrison. Decision.	HIGHLY COMMENDED AUSTRALIA NEEDS A PRESS COUNCIL. The Advocate.	BEST LAYOUT (Magazine) Signs of the Times
HIGHLY COMMENDED BOUND FOR BROADMOOR by Alan Nichols. Southern Cross. TWO YEARS TO LIVE by Helen Burns. Impact AND SO TO WORK by Lesley Hicks. Christian Woman.	BEST DEVOTIONAL ARTICLE COLOUR ME by Graham Wade. Southern Cross.	HIGHLY COMMENDED Southern Cross Impact
BEST EDITORIAL (Magazine) FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS by J. E. McInerney. Light. On the fall of Vietnam.	HIGHLY COMMENDED COULD YOU BE A SAINT? The Advocate. I DIDN'T KNOW HE WOULD FOLLOW ME by Sally Hammond. Signs of the Times. CRANMER'S LEGACY, M. L. Loane. Southern Cross.	BEST LAYOUT (Newspaper) The Advocate
HIGHLY COMMENDED PULPIT AND PEW by A. G. Nancarrow. The Central Times. OH WHAT A TANGLED WEB WE WEAVE by Frank Lowe. Gippsland Anglican Church News.	BEST STORY ON SOCIAL JUSTICE THE AURUKUN AFFAIR. The Methodist Times.	SPECIALS Most Improved Magazine The Gippsland Anglican Church News. Rev. A. Nichols for The Anglican Press Service for providing a genuine service for all the religious press. Alan Gill for his objective reporting on all churches in the secular press.
	HIGHLY COMMENDED RAISE TAXES END POVERTY. Southern Cross Essay by Alan Nichols.	<i>The two winning editorials will be published in the next issue of Southern Cross.</i>

See under recent publications for further material related to the Australasian Religious Press Association.

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