

VACC celebrates in style at their Industry Awards

Over 600 delegates and guests attended Melbourne's Grand Hyatt Ballroom for the Victorian Automotive Chamber of Commerce's Industry Awards and gala event (VIA). Media personality Larry Emdur was master of ceremonies and kicked the evening off with a poignant reference to the need recognise the importance of the occasion not only for the winners, but for all the finalists.

Emdur introduced VACC President Fury Bortolotto, who welcomed the honoured guests and the sponsors, particularly the Platinum Sponsors, Commonwealth Bank and OurAuto, and the Premier Sponsors, Bosch and MTAA Super. He went on to say that he was humbled and proud to be involved in what is the 4th annual VIA and also recognised the achievements of all the finalists. "This is the most public way to show the industry that we adhere to strict standards, are committed to quality and focus on exceptional customer service - it shows you are the best in the business," he said.

"Our industry has never been more attractive, particularly with the accelerating growth of technology being built into today's vehicles. This, of course, will lead to new roles, new challenges and new opportunities, all of which will require a new level of talent. Notwithstanding the current

skill shortages, the industry has always found a way. With the talent on show this evening, I have every confidence that our industry will be in good hands," concluded Bortolotto.

It's fair to say that Emdur at times found the audience somewhat of a challenge as several groups clearly got carried away in the moment, but he handled the situation with the aplomb of a true professional.

Early in the evening we were entertained by "Unusualist" Raymond Crowe and later, as the formalities got underway, the Sam Ludeman Band kept the atmosphere going, and by the end of the night had everyone up on their feet.

Throughout the evening there were 35 categories of awards and Bortolotto presented the following

awards to the winners in the collision repair industry:

Best Body Repair PV Small Business: Essendon Panels.

Best Body Repair PV Large Business: Lyons Body Works, Eltham.

Best CV Body Repairer:

Royans Melbourne.

Both Essendon Panels and Royans Melbourne won their respective categories for the second consecutive year.

Bortolotto then announced a new award for 2019 - Best Businesswoman in Automotive and explained the criteria: "This award recognises vision, innovation, entrepreneurial drive and leadership skills in business. It is my great pleasure to announce the winner of Best Businesswoman in Automotive



VACC CEO Geoff Gwilym



Brian Tanti, David and Samantha Cato and Bevan Ford from Carsales.



Premium Sponsor - Bosch Automotive.

for 2019 is Michelle Ferbrache, Director Essendon Panels.”

Brian Tanti, internationally respected restorer and coach builder, who is widely regarded as a leading voice in the car industry was the specialist judge for the Best Restoration Project. As an experienced restorer, Brian is a co-presenter of Discovery Channel TV series Car Chronicles, and during his long and distinguished career spent 27 years working for the Fox family building and restoring classic cars from Lindsay Fox’s \$45 million car collection. “The winning project is one of the best examples of an HT I’ve seen in many years. It gives me great pleasure to award the Best Restoration Project to Catocraft Auto, Echuca.”

The final award for the evening was the Hall of Fame inductees – those who have won the same award on three separate occasions and Fury Bortolotto was once again front-and-centre to induct:
Hallam Truck Centre
HM Gem Engines
Royans Melbourne
Tyrepower Werribee.

In his closing comments, VACC Chief Executive Officer, Geoff Gwilym, congratulated the finalists and the winners and said: “I am proud to lead an organisation with such a commitment to excellence and it gives me great pleasure to see how much of this was on show this evening.”

Gwilym continued: “The VACC provides key business support services to over 5,000 members, services that include: advocating on behalf of members to governments and other agencies, developing and publishing automotive

industry research, dealing with member, consumer and industry issues, producing regular communications and publications and, of course, promoting automotive industry skills, training and careers. The organisation continues to uphold the strong set of values upon which it was founded, supporting and developing the growth of the many small businesses across the state.”

He concluded by thanking VACC Chairman Fury Bortolotto for his support over the past 12 months, Larry Emdur for

his poise in “trying circumstances”, but most importantly, Gwilym thanked his staff, Anita Balint, Events Manager and Ismini Tsiftis, Functions Co-ordinator, for making it all happen. “Congratulations to all the winners. Be proud of your success and go out and proactively market your achievements,” said Gwilym.

Editor: We congratulate all the finalists and winners, Geoff and his team on a fantastic event once again, and of course, the VACC for their contribution to our industry for over 100 years.



The Sam Ludeman Band.



Fury Bortolotto, Michelle Ferbrache and Dr Imogen Reid VACC Industry Policy Manager.



Charles Camilleri and Fab Fiorenti of Lyons Body Works.



Nick Brooke and Michelle Ferbrache of Essendon Panels.



Máiréad Hayes and Dave Parsons of MATE.