Celebrating excellence, leadership and innovation across the industry

The NSW Oyster Industry Awards recognise outstanding individuals and businesses who are shaping the future of the NSW oyster industry through leadership, innovation, sustainability and service. These awards celebrate those who go above and beyond for oysters, estuaries and community.

BEST FARM GATE EXPERIENCE

This award celebrates a farm-gate operator who delivers an exceptional visitor experience, whether through tours, tastings, storytelling, or hospitality.

Nominees:

- The Oyster Barn (Merimbula Gourmet Oysters)

INDUSTRY CHAMPION AWARD

This award honours an individual or organisation that has gone above and beyond to support and advance the oyster industry through tireless work and advocacy.

Nominees:

- Robert Redmayne
- John Stubbs
- James Wheeler
- Andy Myers
- Shane Buckley

INDUSTRY LEGEND AWARD (20+ YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY)

An individual who has been in the industry for more than 20 years and whose long-standing commitment, leadership, and contributions have shaped and strengthened the oyster industry. They have a wealth of knowledge they share with others and positively influence the industry.

Nominees:

- Hugh Wheeler
- Stefanos Paschilidis

INNOVATION AWARD

A person or organisation that has introduced a new idea, technology, or approach that has significantly improved oyster farming, processing, or marketing. It honours creativity, problem -solving, and a vision for the future of the industry.

Nominees:

- Ian Crisp

RISING STAR AWARD (< 5 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY)

Someone who has been in the industry for less than 5 years who is already making waves. They bring passion, dedication to learning or new ideas and show exceptional promise in the industry.

Nominees:

- Adrian Pinkerton
- Daniel May - Rock Oyster Depot
- Narooma Oysters
- Gabrielle Cowley
- SeaGen Aquaculture

SUSTAINABILITY CHAMPION AWARD

Recognise an individual, business, or initiative that has demonstrated outstanding commitment to sustainable practices in oyster farming. From habitat restoration to waste reduction and climate resilience.

Nominees:

- Sue McIntyre
- Merimbula Gourmet Oysters

Award winners are selected by a joint industry - government panel of previous award winners.
The 2026 NSW Oyster Industry Awards are generously sponsored by NSW DPIRD.

Nominees

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Pip & Dom Boyton (Merimbula Gourmet Oysters / The Oyster Barn): ***Nominated for Best Farm Gate Experience and Sustainability Champion Awards***

Merimbula Gourmet Oysters, owned and operated by Pip and Dom Boyton, is a 45-year-old farm at Millingandi with an open-air Oyster Barn overlooking the lake and mangroves, serving award-winning freshly shucked Sydney Rocks alongside the rare Angasi flat. The business has medalled at every Royal Agricultural Society competition entered and has progressed from traditional rack-and-rail to best-practice floating cultivation, with its on-land nursery contributing broodstock to reef restoration. The Boytons have provided a decade of voluntary NSW Oyster Conference coordination, hold positions on the NSW Shellfish Committee, Seagrass Monitoring Steering Committee, ARAC, Seafood CRC and NSW Farmers (Vice Chair), and serve as SafeFood QA Coordinator. Pip's 2021 Sydney Fish Market auction raised over $24,000 for growers affected by an East Coast Low.

Shane Buckley (Wapengo Rocks Wild Organic Oysters): ***Nominated for Industry Champion Award***

Shane operates Wapengo Rocks Wild Organic Oysters, Australia's first certified organic Sydney Rock Oyster farm. He acquired a post -and-rail lease at Wapengo Lake in 2007 and rebuilt it over six years, achieving Australian Certified Organic accreditation in 2013. His oysters have received gold at the delicious. Harvey Norman Produce Awards, and the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW. Shane is a long-standing industry representative on the NSW Shellfish Committee, continues to modernise these operations through the application of new technology.

Gabrielle Cowley (Australia's Oyster Coast): ***Nominated for Rising Star Award***

In under five years, Gabre has led communications, marketing and brand development for one of the industry's largest organisations, elevating the profile of Australian oysters — particularly the Sydney Rock — through consistent, provenance-led messaging that educates consumers and reinforces premium value. Her approach is distinguished by grassroots engagement: regular farm visits, direct conversations with growers and attendance at industry events in her own time. She also coordinates the Women in Seafood Australasia (WISA) presence at the oyster conference and has championed the industry photo competition. Gabe contributes without seeking recognition, and is widely respected for her humility, professionalism and authentic passion for the industry.

Ian Crisp (Coastal Oysters): ***Nominated for Innovation Award***

Ian has been a pioneer of NSW aquaculture, largely responsible for introducing mechanised longline farming to the state. In the 1990s, working alongside his partner Rose, he identified wild Akoya pearl oysters growing amongst his Sydney Rock stock and developed this into a viable industry, founding Broken Bay Pearls in 2003. Ian has also provided sustained support to government committees and industry associations across his career, and a been a key driver behind the Manning River Oyster Farmers Association.

Daniel May (Rock Oyster Depot): ***Nominated for Rising Star Award***

Daniel founded Rock Oyster Depot in 2022 to promote premium, traceable Sydney Rock Oysters from independent growers along Australia's east coast. After operating at Kings Cross Organic Food Market from 2022 to 2024, he was invited to join Carriageworks Farmers Market, where he curates oysters from up to ten growers each week and has introduced dry shucking to Sydney markets. A boutique wholesale arm launched in 2024 services chefs seeking full traceability. Now an official RAS judge and a presenter at the 2026 Sydney Royal Easter Show Oyster Masterclass, Daniel has been a strong advocate for improved grading standards, post-harvest handling and fair pricing for quality.

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Sue McIntyre (Broadwater Oysters): *Nominated for Sustainability Champion Award*

Sue is a long-term advocate for environmental conservation on the Far South Coast and a key figure in Sapphire Coast Wilderness Oysters, with sustained engagement with local government and a clear commitment to community education on the benefits of the oyster industry. With her husband Greg Carton, she has operated Broadwater Oysters at Pambula Lake for almost 30 years — a multi-award-winning farm-gate business recognised by Landcare as 'Champions of the Catchment' for sustainable practices. Broadwater Oysters has been recognised in the NSW Government Green Globe Awards, and Sue has received an Outstanding Service Award from DPI Fisheries NSW.

Kris McKeahnie & Victoria Pechotsch (Narooma Oysters): *Nominated for Rising Star Award*

Three years ago, Kris and Victoria made the significant decision to leave their cattle and sheep farming operation near Cooma — selling their property, livestock and family home — and relocate with their blended family of five children to pursue oyster farming. They have since worked extensively to establish themselves in a new industry: producing high-quality oysters, applying sustainable practices to care for the Narooma estuary, and contributing to the positioning of Narooma as a destination for premium seafood. Their transition reflects considerable resilience and long-term commitment, and provides a clear example to their children regarding adaptability, sustainability and family enterprise.

Andy Myers: *Nominated for Industry Champion Award*

Andy has been a consistent contributor to the NSW oyster industry for 15 years, working through OceanWatch, NSW Farmers and Oysters Australia. His contributions include developing Environmental Management Systems with dozens of estuary groups, founding the Tide to Tip Clean-Up Initiative (now with 100+ clean-ups under its belt), organising NSW Oyster Conferences, delivering the first statewide carbon and nutrient removal audit for the industry, leading the 2020–25 Oysters Australia Strategic Plan, and developing the Responsible Oyster Farming Training Program now completed by 220 growers. Around $2 million in grants have been devolved to industry through programs under his management.

Stefanos Paschilidis (Smoked Point Oysters): *Nominated for Industry Legend Award*

Stefanos is a generational oyster farmer with more than 50 years' experience in the NSW industry. Over that period he has consistently adapted to new technologies and methods as the industry has evolved, and has remained known among peers for his willingness to support other growers and share knowledge. His career has spanned significant shifts in cultivation practice, market conditions and regulatory frameworks, throughout which he has maintained a quiet, considered approach to the craft. Now approaching retirement, Stefanos is widely regarded as one of the most respected and humble figures in the NSW oyster community.

Adrian Pinkerton (Sandingroove Oysters): *Nominated for Rising Star Award*

Adrian is a first-generation oyster farmer who entered the industry following a career as a chef in Merimbula. He runs Sandingroove Oysters with his wife Jaclyn, operating across three estuaries: Bermagui for catching wild spat, Pambula for growing out juveniles, and Merimbula for shaping and finishing. His work focuses on innovation across biofouling management, cost-of-production economics, mortality reduction, contribution to the breeding program, sharing knowledge and equipment with neighbouring farmers, and oyster marketing. Adi is a member of the seagrass monitoring program steering committee and has recently joined the NSW Farmers Oyster Committee.

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Robert Redmayne (Seven Seas Oysters): *Nominated for Industry Champion Award*

Robert has contributed significantly to the often-unrecognised work of industry committees, consistently advocating for the interests of everyday growers and, on multiple occasions, deferring personal opportunities to enable others to advance. His contributions over several years to the oyster breeding program committee and Oysters Australia R&D have been characterised by clear vision and sustained advocacy on issues that directly affect grower outcomes. This form of consistent, behind-the-scenes leadership, frequently unpaid and unseen, has underpinned a number of the technical advances and policy outcomes from which the broader industry now benefits and reflects a long-standing commitment to collective progress over individual recognition.

SeaGen Aquaculture: *Nominated for Rising Star Award*

Established in 2022, SeaGen has rapidly developed a strong reputation for producing consistent, high-quality hatchery spat, directly addressing one of the industry's most variable inputs. NSW growers consistently report strong early growth, good survival and reliable performance on leases. The business is distinguished by its commitment to continuous improvement through grower partnership: spat performance is actively monitored on leases, with that information feeding back into broodstock selection and production. Expanded nursery operations now enable growers to access larger oysters directly, reducing on-farm labour and early-stage losses. Open communication and regular knowledge sharing have also supported broader industry confidence in hatchery-produced spat.

John Stubbs: *Nominated for Industry Champion Award*

John is a long-standing and highly respected Hawkesbury oyster farmer whose career has been defined by sustained advocacy, leadership and service to the industry, particularly during times of crisis. Mentored in his early career by Hawkesbury figure Robbie Moxham, he subsequently helped found Broken Bay Oyster and more recently, Hawkesbury River Oyster Co. He has served as SQAP Coordinator for the Hawkesbury for many years, and led the establishment of the first Memorandum of Understanding between the oyster industry and local council in 2011. During the 2013 POMS outbreak in the Hawkesbury, he coordinated biosecurity responses and collected critical data that has continued to inform industry responses since. John retired recently, with his son Luke, following in his father's footsteps.

Hugh Wheeler (Wheelers Oysters): *Nominated for Industry Legend Award*

Across more than four decades, Hugh has built a substantial farming operation in Merimbula, and alongside it, a business that has helped redefine how oysters are experienced and valued locally. At a time when most NSW production was sold through wholesale channels, Hugh integrated tourism into the business, initially a seafood retail outlet, subsequently tours, and later a restaurant, bringing visitors into direct contact with the product, supporting local demand and contributing to Merimbula's standing as one of Australia's premier Sydney Rock Oyster estuaries. His influence extends beyond his own operation to the generations of deckhands, growers and family members who have learned the trade from him.

James Wheeler (Wheelers Oysters): *Nominated for Industry Champion Award*

A second-generation Merimbula grower, James has spent the last few years rethinking how a premium Sydney Rock Oyster gets from his farm to the plate. Rather than ride the swings of traditional wholesale markets, he has built direct relationships with some of the country's best kitchens - Saint Peter, Margaret and ARIA among them — working alongside chefs on grading, presentation and flavour to position the SRO as a serious provenance product. He shares this approach with other growers, conducts oyster farm tours that connect consumers with sustainable aquaculture, and contributes through MQAP and NSW Farmers on issues including water quality, food safety, biosecurity and the future of NSW aquaculture.