



2026 CAKE! NETWORK AWARDS GUIDE

The 2026 ACDN Awards celebrate the skill, creativity, professionalism and community spirit that make Australia's cake-decorating sector so extraordinary. This manual is the source of truth for each award, setting out what is being recognised, who is eligible, how nominations and judging work, and the standards used to determine finalists and winners. The awards have been structured to reflect the many different ways people contribute to our sector — as artists, educators, small businesses, retailers, suppliers and innovators — with clear, consistent processes designed to recognise excellence fairly and meaningfully.

For 2026, the ACDN Awards have been restructured to make the program easier to understand, more consistent across categories and clearer about what each award recognises. Award categories have been refined, eligibility requirements made more explicit, and judging processes aligned so that nominees, voters and judges can see how decisions are made. Different award groups now use processes suited to what they are actually recognising — whether that is technical artistry, customer experience, business excellence, product innovation or contribution to the sector.

These changes reflect the continued evolution of ACDN and the diversity of the cake-decorating community. The aim is to create an awards program that is transparent, accessible and meaningful, while preserving the strong community involvement that has always been central to the awards. By publishing clearer criteria, consistent scoring guides and defined judging pathways, we want every participant to understand what they are being considered for and how excellence will be recognised.

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RETAIL, MANUFACTURING & WHOLESALE AWARDS

These awards each have their own unique Judging Process and Criteria.

RETAILER OF THE YEAR – LARGE

The Retailer of the Year — Large award recognises an outstanding cake-decorating retailer operating from two or more physical retail shopfronts and may also include an online store.

The award celebrates a retailer that provides an excellent and reliable customer experience across its locations and relevant online channels. It recognises strong customer care, an appropriate and accessible product range, knowledgeable support, dependable retail operations, adaptability and a positive contribution to the cake-decorating sector and community.

The award is not based on business size, turnover, advertising reach or the number of customer votes alone. Finalists are assessed against the published judging criteria using customer feedback, information supplied by the retailer and relevant public-facing business information.

Due to the size and influence of these businesses in the cake decorating sector, the panel of judges will be made up primarily of business and retail experts from outside the cake decorating who will be supported by a moderation panel of cake sector experts.

RETAILER OF THE YEAR – (LARGE) ROUND 2 JUDGING: FINALISTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Each retailer will be asked to answer the following questions. These provide vital information to the judging panel and retailers unable to return their questionnaire answers before the deadline will not be considered for the National Award. The questionnaire is designed to take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

1. Tell us briefly about your business and the customers you serve
2. What improvement or achievement from the past 12 months are you most proud of?
3. How have do you support customers in choosing and using your products?
4. How have you contributed to the cake-decorating community?
5. Is there anything the judges needs to understand about your business model or operating environment?

RETAILER OF THE YEAR (LARGE) KEY DATES

Process	Description	Date
Public Nominations	Business are nominated or may self nominate for each award category.	11 August – 30 August
Accept Nominations	All nominees will be contacted via email and asked to accept their nomination. Nominees will be asked to provide a logo, head shot and other images of their work as required to allow TCN to promote and run the awards processes.	11 August – 3 rd September
Public Voting	Round 1 voting is a public vote – nominees are encouraged to share their nomination and the link to vote across their marketing platforms. Once voting closes, scores will be tallied, weighted and reviewed by the Awards committee	3 rd September – 20 th September
Finalists Announced	3-6 Finalists will be announced.	23 rd – 26 th September
Finalists Questionnaire	Finalists in this category will be asked to complete a short questionnaire to provide evidence to the judging panel of their work and success within the sector. The answers to these questionnaires will form a key part of the information used as part of the judging process.	26 th September – 3 rd October.
Judges Panel	Round 2 is judging by an expert panel of judges from outside the cake sector. They are experts in retail and business. This panel will assess the business against published criteria and in consideration of the answers provided to the committee to determine the business to receive the national trophy. The Awards panel will meet with the judges and provide moderation of the results to determine the final rankings of the finalists. The Finalist with the top ranking will be awarded the trophy.	27 th September – 12 th October
Awards Presented	During the ACDN Community Night, the top ranked artist will be announced as the award winner and the second ranked artist will receive the Highly Commended award.	20 th November, 7pm Hijinx Hotel QV Melbourne.

ELIGIBILITY – RETAILER OF THE YEAR - LARGE

To be eligible, the nominated business must:

- Operate primarily as a retailer supplying products to cake decorators, bakers or closely related customers
- Operate from two or more permanent physical retail shopfronts under the same business ownership or retail brand.
- Have been actively trading throughout the stated eligibility period
- Sell directly to members of the public
- Hold all licenses, registrations and insurances required for its operations
- Be based in Australia and serve Australian customers
- Agree to participate in the Customer Review Round and, if selected, the finalist judging process
- Provide accurate information needed to confirm its eligibility

A business may also operate an online store. Online sales do not affect its eligibility for this category where it operates two or more qualifying physical shopfronts

For the purposes of this award, temporary market stalls, pop-up shops, collection points, warehouses, showrooms not ordinarily open for retail trade, and separately owned franchise locations do not automatically count as permanent shopfronts. Their eligibility will be determined according to the published category rules.

GROUND FOR THE AWARD TO BE WITHHELD.

In the case that the award receives fewer than 4 nominations, the award will not be judged or awarded for that calendar year.

Insufficient participation - where a retailer cannot provide 10 verified customer reviews, they will be disqualified due to insufficient evidence for effective judging.

In the case that no retailer in the group achieves a weighted final score of 40% or more, the award will not be granted to avoid awarding of businesses unable to demonstrate high quality experience to their customers.

RETAILER OF THE YEAR (LARGE) AWARDS & ACCOLADES

RETAILER OF THE YEAR (LARGE) AWARDS RECOGNISED WITH A TROPHY

LARGE RETAILER OF THE YEAR

RETAILER OF THE YEAR – SMALL AWARD

The Retailer of the Year — Small award recognises an outstanding independent cake-decorating retailer operating through an online store, one physical retail shopfront, is a small volume retail stockist or a combination of the above

The award celebrates a retailer that delivers excellent customer care, relevant products, knowledgeable assistance and a reliable purchasing experience within the scale and structure of its business. It also recognises adaptability, thoughtful business development and a positive contribution to the cake-decorating sector and community.

Finalists are assessed relative to their business model and available resources. An online-only retailer, a retailer with one shopfront and a retailer operating through both channels may all demonstrate excellence in different ways.

RETAILER OF THE YEAR (SMALL) KEY DATES

Process	Description	Date
Public Nominations	Business are nominated or may self nominate for each award category.	11 August – 30 August
Accept Nominations	All nominees will be contacted via email and asked to accept their nomination. Nominees will be asked to provide a logo, head shot and other images of their work as required to allow TCN to promote and run the awards processes.	11 August – 3 rd September
Public Voting	Round 1 voting is a public vote – nominees are encouraged to share their nomination and the link to vote across their marketing platforms. Once voting closes, scores will be tallied, weighted and reviewed by the Awards committee	3 rd September – 20 th September
Finalists Announced	For each category, the top voted business in each State/Region of Australia will be announced as the regional winner and will be announced as the a finalist that moves forward to compete for the national trophy.	23 rd – 26 th September
Judges Panel	Round 2 is judging by an expert panel of judges. They will assess the business against published criteria to determine the business to receive the national trophy. The Awards panel will meet with the judges and provide moderation of the results to determine the final rankings of the finalists. The Finalist with the top ranking will be awarded the trophy.	27 th September – 12 th October
Awards Presented	During the ACDN Community Night, the top ranked artist will be announced as the award winner and the second ranked artist will receive the Highly Commended award.	20 th November, 7pm Hijinx Hotel QV Melbourne.

ELIGIBILITY – RETAILER OF THE YEAR – SMALL

To be eligible, the nominated business must:

- Operate primarily as a retailer supplying products to cake decorators, bakers or closely related customers
- An online store, one permanent physical shopfront, one regular market or pop-up retail outlet, or a combination of these including or in combination with an online shopfront
- Have been actively trading throughout the stated eligibility period
- Sell directly to members of the public
- Hold all licenses, registrations and insurances required for its operations
- Be based in Australia and serve Australian customers
- Agree to participate in the Customer Review Round and, if selected, the finalist judging process
- Provide accurate information needed to confirm its eligibility

A business operating two or more permanent physical retail shopfronts is not eligible for this category and should be considered for Retailer of the Year — Large. Businesses entered in Retailer of the Year — Small cannot also compete in Retailer of the Year — Large in the same awards year.

A regular market or pop-up retail outlet is a recurring in-person sales location operated by the business at least twice per month, or on another published and consistent schedule approved by the awards organisers.

Regular market and pop-up trading is recognised as a valid retail model. Market appearances do not count as separate permanent shopfronts when determining eligibility for the Large Retailer category

RETAILER OF THE YEAR (SMALL) AWARDS & ACCOLADES

RETAILER OF THE YEAR (SMALL) AWARDS RECOGNISED WITH A TROPHY

SMALL RETAILER OF THE YEAR

RETAILER OF THE YEAR (SMALL) AWARDS RECOGNISED WITH A CERTIFICATE

QLD SMALL RETAILER OF THE YEAR

NSW SMALL RETAILER OF THE YEAR

ACT/TAS SMALL RETAILER OF THE YEAR

VIC SMALL RETAILER OF THE YEAR

SA SMALL RETAILER OF THE YEAR

NT/WA SMALL RETAILER OF THE YEAR

WHOLESALE SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Wholesale Supplier of the Year award recognises an outstanding business supplying products to retailers, cake businesses and other trade customers within the Australian cake-decorating sector.

The award celebrates excellence in product range, trade service, product knowledge, ordering and fulfilment, reliability of supply, business adaptability and contribution to the sector

Products may be manufactured by the business, produced on its behalf, imported or distributed. The award assesses the quality of the supplier's service and contribution to its trade customers rather than the geographic origin of the products it supplies.

Due to the size and influence of these businesses in the cake decorating sector, the panel of judges will be made up primarily of business and retail experts from outside the cake decorating who will be supported by a moderation panel of cake sector experts.

CUSTOMER QUESTIONS ON VOTING FORM

1) How would you rate the supplier's trade customer service and communication?

Judging Guide for Customers

5 - Excellent: The supplier is consistently responsive, professional and easy to communicate with. Enquiries are answered promptly, important information is communicated clearly, and any concerns or problems are handled effectively. The trade customer feels valued and well supported.

3 - Good: The supplier provides polite and generally reliable service. Most enquiries are answered and important information is usually communicated, although response times or follow-up may sometimes vary

1 - Poor: The supplier is difficult to contact, slow to respond or unclear in its communication. Enquiries, concerns or problems are not handled appropriately, and the trade customer receives limited support.

2) How would you rate the suppliers product range, quality and value for trade customers?

Judging Guide for Customers

5 - Excellent: The supplier offers a strong and relevant range of consistently high-quality products. Trade pricing and terms provide appropriate value, and the range supports the needs of the customer's business

3 - Good: The supplier offers a suitable product range of generally reliable quality and reasonable trade value. Some products, options or price points may be limited, but the range meets most business needs.

1 - Poor: The product range is limited, unsuitable or frequently unavailable. Product quality may be inconsistent, and the pricing or trade terms provide poor value for the customer's business

3) How would you rate the ease, accuracy and reliability of ordering and fulfilment?

Judging Guide for Customers

5 - Excellent: The ordering process is clear, straightforward and dependable. Orders are processed accurately, stock and delivery information is reliable, and products arrive within the advised timeframe and in appropriate condition.

3 - Good: Ordering and fulfilment generally work as expected. There may be occasional delays, stock issues or minor errors, but these are communicated and resolved appropriately.

1 - Poor: The ordering process is confusing or unreliable. Orders may be inaccurate, delayed, incomplete or poorly packed, and stock or delivery information may be unclear. Problems are not resolved satisfactorily.

- 4) How would you rate the supplier's product knowledge and the support they provide to your business?

Judging Guide for Customers

5 - Excellent: The supplier demonstrates strong product and industry knowledge. It provides clear, accurate and practical advice, helps the customer make suitable purchasing decisions, and offers support that contributes positively to the customer's business

3 - Good: The supplier can answer common product questions and provides reasonable assistance when requested. More detailed or specialised support may sometimes be limited

1 - Poor: The supplier provides little useful product guidance or business support. Information may be inaccurate, unclear or difficult to obtain, and the supplier shows limited understanding of the customer's needs

- 5) How would you rate the suppliers innovation, adaptability and contribution to the cake decorating sector?

Judging Guide for Customers

5 – Excellent: The supplier responds positively to changes in customer and industry needs. It introduces useful products, services or improvements and makes a meaningful contribution through activities such as education, collaboration, industry support or responsible business practices

3 – Good: The supplier shows some evidence of adapting its range or service and participates positively in the sector. Its contribution is useful, although it may be occasional or limited in scope

1 – Poor: There is little evidence that the supplier responds to changing industry needs or improves its products or services. It makes little visible contribution to the broader cake-decorating sector.

- 6) Trade Customer Comment

Please provide a brief comment describing your experience with the retailer.

Helpful comments include a specific example of:

- the service or communication you received
- the quality, range or value of the products supplied;
- how an order, delay or problem was handled
- the product knowledge or business support provided
- how the supplier has supported or contributed to the sector.

Comments should be factual, respectful and based on your own experience as a trade customer

WHOLESALE SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR KEY DATES

Process	Description	Date
Public Nominations	Business are nominated or may self nominate for each award category.	11 August – 30 August
Accept Nominations	All nominees will be contacted via email and asked to accept their nomination. Nominees will be asked to provide a logo, head shot and other images of their work as required to allow TCN to promote and run the awards processes.	11 August – 3 rd September
Customer Voting	Customers of the nominated businesses be asked to vote by answering 5 questions and providing a comment for the judges to review.	3 rd September – 20 th September
No Finalists	Due to the small number of businesses in this category – all nominees will be eligible and in the running for the national prize, there will be no finalists announcement.	
Judges Panel	Round 2 is judging by an expert panel of judges from outside the cake sector. They are experts in retail and business. This panel will assess the business against published criteria, customer scores and comments to determine which business will receive the national trophy. The Awards panel will meet with the judges and provide moderation of the results to determine the final rankings of the finalists. The Finalist with the top ranking will be awarded the trophy.	27 th September – 12 th October
Awards Presented	During the ACDN Community Night, the top ranked artist will be announced as the award winner and the second ranked artist will receive the Highly Commended award.	20 th November, 7pm Hijinx Hotel QV Melbourne.

ELIGIBILITY – WHOLE SALE SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR

To be eligible, the nominated business must:

- Supply products primarily to retailers, cake businesses or other trade customers;
- Operate predominantly on a wholesale or business-to-business basis
- Have no material direct retail exposure to the general public, except where incidental to its wholesale operations
- Have been actively trading throughout the stated eligibility period
- Supply Australian trade customers
- Hold the licences, registrations and insurances required for its operations
- Agree to participate in the review and finalist judging process
- Provide accurate information required to confirm eligibility

A business may supply products that it manufactures, imports, distributes or has produced under its own brand. The method or location of manufacture does not, by itself, affect eligibility

GROUND FOR THE AWARD TO BE WITHHELD.

In the case that the award receives fewer than 4 nominations, the award will not be judged or awarded for that calendar year.

Insufficient participation - where a retailer cannot provide 10 verified customer reviews, they will be disqualified due to insufficient evidence for effective judging.

In the case that no whole sale supplier in the group achieves a weighted final score of 40% or more, the award will not be granted to avoid awarding of businesses unable to demonstrate high quality experience to their customers.

WHOLESALE SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

WHOLESALE SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR AWARDS RECOGNISED WITH A TROPHY

WHOLE SALE SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR

JUDGING RUBRIC – RETAILER OF THE YEAR LARGE AND SMALL, WHOLESALE SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR

Judging Criterion	Weight	1 - limited evidence	2 - Developing	3 - Good standard	4 - Very Strong	5 - Outstanding
Customer Service and Customer Care	25%	There is little evidence of consistent customer care. Customer comments identify significant concerns, poor communication or unresolved issues. The retailer's answers do not explain clear customer-service practices.	Some positive service practices are evident, but delivery appears inconsistent. Customer feedback is mixed, and the retailer provides limited evidence of how enquiries, concerns or complaints are managed.	The retailer demonstrates reliable and respectful customer service. Customer comments are generally positive, and the retailer provides credible examples of supporting customers and resolving issues appropriately.	Customer care is clearly embedded in the business. Feedback shows consistently positive experiences, responsive communication and effective problem resolution. The retailer provides strong examples of adapting support to customer needs.	The retailer demonstrates an exceptional and consistently customer-centred approach. Evidence from customers, retailer responses and public-facing channels strongly aligns and shows proactive support, trust, accessibility and exemplary handling of customer needs.
Product range, knowledge and accessibility	20%	The range appears limited or poorly matched to the customers served. Product information is difficult to find, unclear or inaccurate. There is little evidence of useful product knowledge or accessible customer support.	The retailer provides a basic range and some product assistance, but there are noticeable gaps in availability, information, accessibility or staff knowledge.	The product range is appropriate for the retailer's customers. Information is generally clear, and the retailer demonstrates sound knowledge and the ability to provide useful guidance.	The retailer offers a strong, relevant and well-presented range. Product guidance is knowledgeable and practical, and customers can access clear information, suitable alternatives and support through relevant purchasing channels.	The retailer demonstrates exceptional understanding of its market. Its range, specialist knowledge and customer guidance is highly relevant, accessible and responsive. Evidence shows that customers are actively helped to make informed and suitable product choices.
Reliable Retail Operations	20%	There is significant evidence of unclear, inconsistent or unreliable purchasing, ordering, fulfilment or communication. Public-facing information may be incomplete, inaccurate or difficult to navigate.	Basic operations are in place, but customer feedback or public information indicates recurring issues with ordering, stock information, delivery, collection, accuracy or communication.	The retailer provides a generally clear and dependable purchasing experience. Orders, payments, fulfilment and customer communication are managed to a good and appropriate standard.	Retail operations are efficient, clear and reliable across the retailer's relevant channels. Evidence shows strong systems, accurate information, effective communication and appropriate responses when problems occur.	The retailer delivers an exceptionally dependable and well-managed customer experience. Operations are seamless, transparent and responsive, with strong evidence of consistency, accuracy, accessibility and effective contingency management.
Business Development and Adaptability	15%	The retailer provides little evidence of improvement, development or response to changing customer or business needs during the past 12 months. Claims are vague or unsupported.	Some change or development is described, but its purpose, implementation or benefit is unclear. Evidence of adaptation or measurable improvement is limited.	The retailer identifies a relevant improvement or achievement and explains how it benefited the business or its customers. It demonstrates an appropriate capacity to respond to change.	The retailer provides strong evidence of thoughtful development, innovation or adaptation during the past 12 months. The improvement has a clear purpose and has produced meaningful benefits for customers or business operations.	The retailer demonstrates exceptional strategic development and adaptability. It has identified a genuine need, implemented an effective response and shown clear, well-supported impact while maintaining or improving customer service.
Contribution to the sector and community	20%	There is little evidence of contribution beyond ordinary commercial activity. Claims of community or sector support are unclear, incidental or unsupported.	The retailer demonstrates occasional participation or support, but the contribution appears limited in reach, consistency or impact.	The retailer makes a positive and credible contribution through activities such as education, collaboration, customer support, local engagement, inclusion or responsible business practice regardless of the size of their contribution (quality over quantity)	The retailer provides strong evidence of thoughtful development, innovation or adaptation during the past 12 months. The improvement has a clear purpose and has produced meaningful benefits for customers or business operations.	The retailer makes an exceptional contribution that strengthens, connects or advances the sector or community. Its contribution is sustained, purposeful and demonstrably beneficial, extending meaningfully beyond its normal commercial interests, regardless of the size of the contribution.

NEW PRODUCT OF THE YEAR AWARD

The New Product of the Year award recognises an outstanding product newly introduced to the Australian cake-decorating sector during the eligibility period.

The award celebrates a product that responds to a genuine customer or industry need and demonstrates excellence in quality, performance, usability and value. It also recognises meaningful innovation, whether through a completely new product or a substantial improvement to an existing product.

Products will be assessed through a consistent practical judging process. The award is not determined by brand size, sales volume, advertising reach or public popularity.

NEW PRODUCT OF THE YEAR KEY DATES

Process	Description	Date
Public Nominations	Business are nominated or may self nominate for each award category.	11 August – 30 August
Accept Nominations	All nominees will be contacted via email and asked to accept their nomination. Nominees will be asked to provide a logo, head shot and other images of their work as required to allow TCN to promote and run the awards processes.	11 August – 3 rd September
Provision of Product for Testing	Nominated Businesses will be asked to send in 6 units of their nominated product for testing.	3 rd September – 10th September
Product Testing and Judging	The products will be send to judges who are experts in the field/technique for which that product would be used. They will assess each product's merits against the published criteria and provide a score. Scores will be reviewed by a moderation panel before final rankings are decided.	10th September – 12 th October
Awards Presented	During the ACDN Community Night, the top ranked artist will be announced as the award winner and the second ranked artist will receive the Highly Commended award.	20 th November, 7pm Hijinx Hotel QV Melbourne.

NEW PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible, the nominated product must:

- be designed for use within cake decorating, baking or a closely related creative field;
- have first become commercially available to Australian customers during the published eligibility period;
- be available for purchase in Australia at the time of judging;
- be a new product or a substantially improved version of an existing product;
- be entered by the product's manufacturer, Australian brand owner, importer, distributor or authorised wholesale supplier;
- comply with all applicable Australian safety, labelling, food, consumer and product requirements;
- be supplied in its normal retail or trade-ready form;
- include any instructions, warnings or supporting information ordinarily provided to customers; and
- be supplied in sufficient quantity for eligibility checks and practical judging.

WHAT COUNTS AS A NEW PRODUCT?

A product may be eligible where it is:

- a completely new product;
- a new formulation, material, tool or piece of equipment;
- a substantially redesigned or improved version of an existing product; or
- an existing product newly introduced to the Australian market during the eligibility period.

A change to colour, flavour, size, packaging or branding alone would not ordinarily be considered a new product unless the change creates a clear and meaningful new benefit for the intended user.

PRODUCT ORIGIN

Products may be manufactured in Australia or overseas.

The place of manufacture does not determine eligibility. The award recognises the quality, performance, relevance and value of the product as supplied to the Australian cake-decorating sector.

PRODUCTS NOT ELIGIBLE

The following would not ordinarily be eligible:

- Products released before the stated eligibility period;
- Minor packaging or branding updates;

- A new colour, flavour or size with no substantial functional difference;
- Products that are not commercially available in Australia;
- Products that are readily available on retail marketplaces such as Amazon.com, Temu, Aliexpress etc.
- Prototypes or products not yet available for purchase;
- Products entered without the authority of the manufacturer, brand owner, importer or distributor; and
- Products that cannot be supplied for practical assessment.

ENTRY COMMITMENT

By entering, the nominated business agrees to:

- Provide accurate product and release information;
- Disclose any special handling, storage, safety or equipment requirements;
- Supply the required judging samples by the stated deadline;
- Permit the product to be opened, used and tested as part of the judging process; and
- Accept that samples used in judging may not be returned.

ELIGIBILITY CHECKS AND SHORTLISTING

Products may be entered by the manufacturer, brand owner, importer, distributor or authorised wholesale supplier.

Each nominated product must be submitted with:

- Confirmation of the product's Australian release date;
- The recommended retail price;
- A brief description of the intended user and purpose;
- An explanation of what is new or substantially improved;
- Any instructions, warnings or supporting information provided to customers;
- Relevant safety, ingredient, storage or compliance information; and
- The required product samples.

All entries will first be checked against the published eligibility requirements. In the case that more than 10 products are entered into this category, the Awards panel will use the published criteria to review the entries and pick 4-6 finalists.

STAGE 2: PRACTICAL PRODUCT ASSESSMENT

Products will be assessed by an independent panel with relevant cake-decorating, baking, technical or product experience.

Each judge will test every finalist against the published criteria. Testing will be based on the product's intended purpose and the claims made by the entrant.

Because products may differ in type, material and use, the exact practical test may vary. However, each finalist will be assessed through a documented process designed to ensure that comparable products are tested consistently and that all products are judged fairly against their intended function.

PRODUCT SAMPLES

Finalists must provide six (6) identical samples for practical assessment.

Samples must:

- Be unopened and supplied in their ordinary retail or trade-ready form;
- Be from normal production stock;
- Include the standard instructions, packaging and warnings;
- Be suitable for use within the stated judging period; and
- Be supplied by the published deadline.

During judging, products may be opened, used, consumed or altered during testing and will not be returned. Where specialist equipment is genuinely required, the entrant must disclose this at the time of entry.

INDEPENDENT SCORING AND MODERATION

Judges will score each product independently before participating in a moderated panel discussion. Scores will be reviewed for consistency, and judges may be asked to explain unusually high or low scores. No single judge can determine the outcome.

AWARD STANDARD

The product achieving the highest weighted score will be named New Product of the Year, provided it meets the standard expected of a national award winner.

GROUND ON WHICH THE AWARD MAY BE WITHHELD.

Where no finalist reaches an award-worthy standard, the award may be withheld.

NEW PRODUCT OF THE YEAR AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

NEW PRODUCT OF THE YEAR AWARDS RECOGNISED WITH A TROPHY

NEW PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

JUDGING RUBRIC – NEW PRODUCT OF THE YEAR						
Judging Criterion	Weight	1 - Limited	2 - Developing	3 - Good standard	4 - Very Strong	5 - Outstanding
Quality and Performance	30%	The product does not perform reliably as intended, produces inconsistent results, or has significant quality concerns	The product performs some functions adequately but has noticeable limitations, inconsistency or reliability issues	The product performs as intended to a good and dependable standard, with acceptable consistency and quality.	The product performs very well, produces consistently strong results and demonstrates a high level of quality and reliability.	The product performs exceptionally well, is highly consistent and delivers a clearly superior result for its intended purpose.
Innovation and identified need	20%	There is little evidence of a genuine new idea, meaningful improvement or identified customer need.	The product offers a modest variation or improvement, but the benefit or need addressed is limited or unclear.	The product addresses a genuine need or provides a useful improvement over existing options	The product demonstrates a thoughtful and meaningful innovation that clearly improves the user experience, outcome or process.	The product represents an exceptional innovation or substantial advancement that addresses a significant sector need in a highly effective way.
Ease of use and user experience	20%	The product is difficult, confusing or frustrating to use, even when instructions are followed.	The product can be used successfully, but the process is unnecessarily difficult, inconsistent or requires significant additional knowledge.	The product is reasonably intuitive and performs well when used as directed. The overall user experience is appropriate for its intended customer.	The product is easy and efficient to use, with thoughtful design that clearly supports the intended customer.	The product provides an exceptional user experience. It is intuitive, efficient and significantly improves the ease, confidence or enjoyment of the task
Value for the intended customer	15%	The price appears difficult to justify relative to the product's performance, quantity, durability or benefit	The product provides some value but is comparatively expensive or offers limited additional benefit for its intended customer.	The product provides reasonable value for its price, quality, performance and intended use	The product offers very good value, with clear benefits that justify its price or provide meaningful efficiencies, durability or improved results.	The product provides exceptional value for its intended customer, delivering substantial benefit, performance or efficiency relative to its cost
Instructions, packaging and usage	15%	Instructions or essential information are unclear, incomplete or absent. Packaging or presentation negatively affects safe, effective or appropriate use.	Basic information is provided but there are noticeable gaps in clarity, usability, protection or suitability.	Instructions and packaging are clear and appropriate and provide the information needed for normal use.	Information is comprehensive and easy to understand. Packaging is practical, appropriate and supports the effective use, storage or handling of the product.	Instructions, packaging and supporting information are exceptionally clear, thoughtful and fit for purpose, significantly enhancing the overall product experience