

F.Y.I.

Thinkerbell and Advertising Associates share the honours at IMAA's Pitch-Chella competition

July 31, 2026 8:50



Independent Media Agencies Australia has announced the winners of its 2026 Pitch-Chella competition, with Advertising Associates and Thinkerbell sharing first place. The event showcased pitches aimed at supporting the anti-bullying charity You Can Sit With Me.

The announcement:



IMAA gold winners

Emerging industry talent from independent media agencies Advertising Associates, Thinkerbell, Slingshot and Reload Media, are this year's winners of the Independent Media Agencies Australia (IMAA) biggest-ever Pitch-Chella competition.

Teams from Advertising Associates (Jeremy O'Connell, Emily Dunne, Sam Christie-Sherill and Brigh Robinson) and Thinkerbell (Eduarda Cuadros Marquez and Erin Beers) took out joint first place in this year's competition, with Slingshot's Neha Sharma and Anna Nagpaul coming in third, and Reload Media's Cleo Cox-Lawson, Drew Hart, Yashi Wadivala and Harriet Wing receiving highly commended.

All four teams prepared strong strategic pitches for the 2026 program's chosen charity, national anti-bullying organisation, You Can Sit With Me, pitching innovative national media campaigns focused on building brand awareness and community engagement for the organisation.

Advertising Associates pitched a partnership proposal with Australian women's soccer team the Matildas, leveraging the team's significant media attention, cultural influence and passionate fan base to elevate You Can Sit With Me's message beyond schools and into the national conversation. Advertising Associates' pitch focused on the message "one team, one cause, one colour and one message: you belong here" using a cohesive, sport-led platform and transferrable creative assets to deliver a consistent message across radio, outdoor, digital, social and school activations.

Thinkerbell's pitch focused on building You Can Sit With Me's

thinkerbell then reached out to the real world, taking its message out of the classroom and into the real world to demonstrate that overarching inclusion is the way forward. The team focused on reaching school leaders and parents, meeting them when they're already thinking about belonging – at stadiums, during the school commute, and while listening to parenting podcasts. The team suggested innovative ideas such as hijacking Ticketek's existing "can't leave a single seat empty" check-out to include a You Can Sit With Me pledge at the point of purchase, using yellow seating across schools as a way for educators to signal their commitment to preventing bullying.

Now in its third year, Pitch-Chella has grown to become a key event for up-and-coming indie media agency talent, giving them the opportunity to collaborate to hone their written and live pitching skills.

Eight finalists were selected to present their pitches to a judging panel of Australian marketing experts, including Audience360 Managing Director, Jenny Parkes, TrinityP3 Business Director and Global Media Lead, Steven Wright, Orand Founder, Adam Hickey, and You Can Sit With Me Founder and CEO, Sophie Sparks.

"As an organisation, our vision is simple: to ensure every child walks through the school gates knowing they are safe, accepted and able to reach their full potential," Sparks said.

"We were overwhelmed with the way this year's Pitch-Chella participants responded to our mission. Every team had taken the time to thoroughly understand our mission and our pain points, and to create media campaigns that would not only boost awareness but ensure You Can Sit With Me was part of the national conversation. I'd like to extend my gratitude to all this year's Pitch-Chella teams for their work – it's inspiring to see the talent and creativity on display across our independent media agencies."

IMAA CEO, Sam Buchanan, said: "The standard of this year's winning pitches was exceptional.

"Each team brought a unique perspective and a truly outstanding level of preparation and professionalism to their pitches. It's encouraging to see our emerging industry talent committed to making a meaningful impact. The continued success of the IMAA's Pitch-Chella initiative is a sign of the strength of our indie sector and the calibre of the next generation of media professionals."

The winning teams were announced at a special award ceremony at Sydney's Beresford Hotel last night, which was attended by participants from this year's record 24 competing teams, along with IMAA members and partners.

The 2026 Pitch-Chella initiative was led by a steering committee, including Lisa Blackshaw from Co.gency and Taylor Fielding from TFM, alongside the IMAA team.

This year's program was sponsored by gold sponsor Audience360 and supporting sponsors Are Media, Channel Factory, News Australia, Meta, Microsoft Advertising, Snapchat, and Taboola.

For more information, visit: https://theimaa.com.au/pitch-chella/?utm_source=mighty_mumbrella

Source: Press release

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YOU CAN SIT WITH ME

2 COMMENTS

ADD COMMENT

Kim Beers (yes Im Erin's mum) 4 Aug 26

Why isn't there a photo including the winners from Thinkerbell ?
you only have the AA team photo not 2 seperate winning teams.

 Reply

User ID not verified.

Tim Burrowes 5 Aug 26

Hi Kim,

Thanks for asking. All our mums read Mumbrella.

I've updated the post with another picture (unfortunately the IMAA supplied it without captions so hopefully Erin is in it)

Cheers,
Tim – Mumbrella
👍 [Reply](#)

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