

2026
Smart50
SmartCompany | OPTUS

CRITERIA FOR 2026 SMART50

● **How to apply**



Call for entries

Since 2007, the Smart50 Awards have delivered national recognition to the fastest-growing businesses across Australia.

Over the years, the Smart50 Awards have spotlighted and celebrated iconic Australian businesses, including Atlassian, Showpo, Adore Beauty, July, Mr Yum, and so many more.

SmartCompany has partnered with Optus for the 2026 Smart50 Awards. There are two award streams to apply for:

- The Smart50 list, which recognises the fastest-growing SMEs in Australia; and
- The Smart50 categories, which celebrate business achievements in areas of community, innovation and more.



KEY DATES FOR 2026

- **Monday June 29:** Entries open
- **Monday August 31:** Entry deadline
- **Friday September 4:** Late entry deadline
- **Tuesday September 29:** Category award shortlists announced
- **Thursday November 12:** Smart50 gala event

Why apply?

Year after year, Australian businesses continue to lead the way with resilience and innovation. It's time to amplify and celebrate your success.

For 18 years, Smart50 has been the premier program for uncovering the best and brightest in the nation's SME landscape.

[Look back at last year's winners and entrants.](#)

JOIN A LEGACY OF ICONIC AUSTRALIAN INNOVATORS

Look back at past winners and entrants and you'll see the who's who of companies that have shaped Australia's business landscape, including Atlassian, Showpo, Adore Beauty, Mr Yum and July, to name a few.

Smart50 winners stay in the headlines; some rake in billions, some define consumer trends, some make waves overseas or complete big acquisitions. What will this year's winner do?

BE PART OF THE STORY

Hearing from you and gathering insights from your entries helps our editorial team uncover trends and form coverage that represents the real experience of people in Australian business. On top of that, Smart50 highlights, updates and winner announcements will be featured in SmartCo. Media's web and social media content, which reaches 1.9 million readers each month.

PARTY!

What better way to cap off another challenging year than to get together and celebrate?

We'll count down our 2026 Smart50 and name the winners of our category awards at our end-of-year gala event in Melbourne on Thursday, November 12.

Eligibility, terms and conditions

By submitting your entry, you agree to the terms and conditions below.

ELIGIBILITY FOR THE SMART50 LIST

In order to be eligible, businesses entering the *SmartCompany* Smart50 Awards list must:

- be registered Australian businesses;
- not be under external administration or experiencing an insolvency event;
- have been in business for a **minimum of three years**;
- demonstrate a minimum of \$500,000 (excluding GST) in revenue in each of the last three financial years (2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26); and
- have demonstrable revenue growth year-on-year for the last three financial years (2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26).

ELIGIBILITY FOR THE RISING STAR AWARD

The Rising Star award recognises the achievements of high-growth startups.

Applicants applying for the Rising Star award must:

- have been in business **for up to three years**;
- demonstrate revenue and customer acquisition growth in each of the financial years it has traded in; and
- not be eligible for the Smart50 list.

Companies applying for either the Smart50 list or the Rising Star Award must also:

- be independent, and not part of a larger corporation. For example, individual franchised stores are not eligible for the awards. Business divisions or subsidiaries of larger corporations are also not eligible for the awards; and
- have fewer than 200 employees.

Entering – and winning! – the Smart50

You can [start your entry here](#). Enter your details, confirm your eligibility, and fill out the short survey questionnaire.

Supporting financial documentation must be provided in order to qualify for consideration in the Smart50 Awards. This should be in the form of:

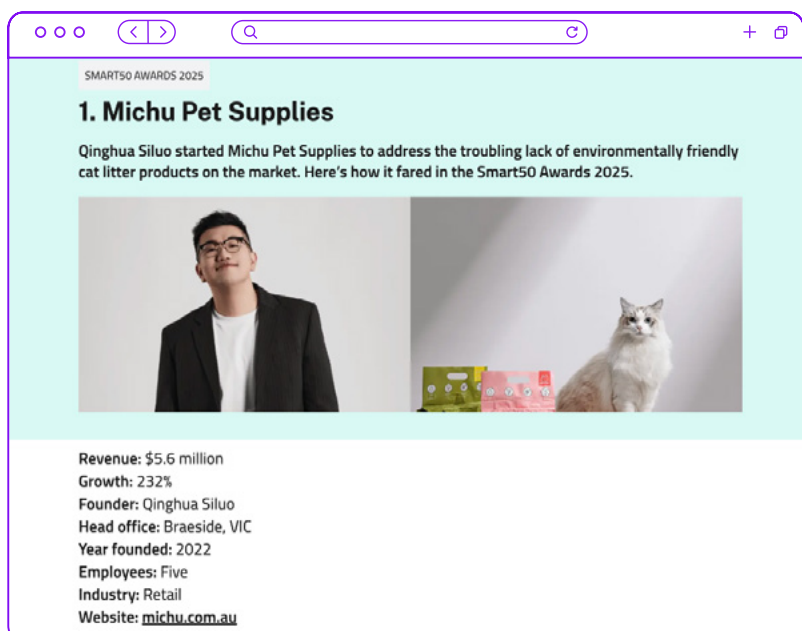
- scanned documentation from the company accountant or financial officer proving annual revenue ex. GST for the relevant financial years;
- scanned documentation from the Australian Taxation Office proving annual revenue ex. GST for the relevant financial years; or
- scanned documentation from a company officer proving customer acquisition growth (for Rising Star award applications).

Should you be successful in making the Smart50, **this information WILL be published on *SmartCompany***. An example is provided below.

The Smart50 winner is the eligible Australian business with the highest growth over the past three financial years.

The Rising Star Award winner is the eligible Australian business up to three years old with the highest growth.

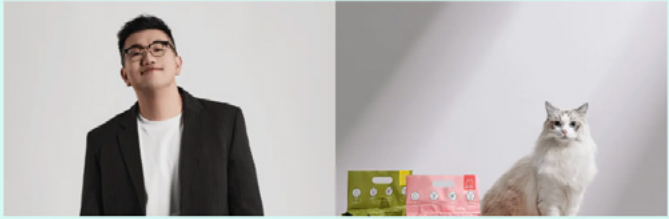
[Read the full terms and conditions](#)



SMART50 AWARDS 2025

1. Michu Pet Supplies

Qinghua Siluo started Michu Pet Supplies to address the troubling lack of environmentally friendly cat litter products on the market. Here's how it fared in the Smart50 Awards 2025.



Revenue: \$5.6 million
Growth: 232%
Founder: Qinghua Siluo
Head office: Braeside, VIC
Year founded: 2022
Employees: Five
Industry: Retail
Website: michu.com.au

The categories

In addition to the Smart50, *SmartCompany* also presents Smart50 category awards, which recognise standout businesses for their innovation, contributions to the community, early-stage success, and more. These awards are our chance to celebrate the positive and inspirational contributions of growing businesses beyond pure financial performance, and they are your chance to showcase the great work your company has been doing over the last 12 months.

RISING STAR AWARD

SPONSORED BY AUSTRALIAN SMALL BUSINESS
AND FAMILY ENTERPRISE OMBUDSMAN (ASBFEO)

This award recognises the achievements of high-growth startups younger than three years. Startups younger than three years are not eligible for the Smart50 list, but can enter the Rising Star category. Startups more than three years old are not eligible for the Rising Star Award but can enter the Smart50 list and other categories. Previous winners of the Rising Star Award include Mr Yum and TernX.

RESILIENCE AWARD

This award recognises a business that has shown resilience, adaptability and leadership in the last year. Previous winners include Charlie's Fine Food Co, Untitled Group and Orbitkey.

COMMUNITY HERO AWARD

This award will celebrate a small business that has supported its clientele or wider community in a productive, uplifting or charitable way. Previous winners include Code Like a Girl and SHE-com.

INNOVATOR AWARD

SPONSORED BY MASTERCARD

This award celebrates initiatives that spark progressive change in an industry through disruptive strategies, digital solutions or original ideas. Previous winners include ELMO, Easy Signs and Lawpath.

RETAILER OF THE YEAR

SPONSORED BY LIGHTSPEED

This award celebrates innovations in product offerings, outstanding customer service, employee care and marketing initiatives. Previous winners include Muscle Nation and Farmers Pick.

SUSTAINABILITY AWARD

This award recognises a business that has rolled out key initiatives or made specific changes to its business model to improve its sustainability. This could include measures to improve the business' waste reduction, energy efficiency or climate action. Entrants will need to provide a detailed example of an action they have taken and its effect on their business. Previous winners of this award include Your Food Collective and Nuffin Dips.

MARKETING AWARD

SPONSORED BY MICHU PET SUPPLIES

This award recognises the most impressive marketing campaigns from an Australian SME this year. We want to celebrate the most clever and unexpected campaigns that led to real results for business, regardless of the marketing spend. Entrants will need to provide a detailed overview of their marketing campaign and the outcomes it achieved for the business. Previous winners of this award include The Laundry Lady and Michu Pet Supplies.

THE PEOPLE POWER AWARD

This award celebrates a growing business that has an enlightened and supportive approach to its people and culture. Entrants will need to provide specific examples of initiatives and policies that support their team, and explain how these measures have helped the business attract and retain great employees. Previous winners of this award include The Laundry Lady and Equality Media & Marketing.

SMART AND LASTING AWARD

This 'hall of fame' category award is for an Australian business that has appeared in the Smart50 in multiple years, thanks to its continual growth and exemplification of the Smart50 values of innovation, resilience and community. This award is judged internally.

REGIONAL AWARD

This award celebrates the achievements of a fast-growing business located in regional Australia. To be eligible, a business' primary place of business must be located outside of metropolitan areas. This includes any towns, small cities and areas that lie beyond the major capital cities of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Canberra. Entrants must be able to demonstrate leadership and/or influence within their industry and/or region. In 2025, this award was won by Ramp Advisory Partners.

EXPORT AWARD

This award recognises an Australian SME that has achieved success exporting goods or services to international markets. Entrants must outline which international markets they export to and demonstrate growth in the company's exports to those regions. In 2025, this award was won by Memobottle.

FOUNDER OF THE YEAR AWARD

SPONSORED BY OPTUS

A recent addition to the Smart50 Awards, the Founder of the Year Award celebrates the founder of a fast-growing Australian business. Entrants must be able to demonstrate excellence in business leadership, successful business outcomes and influence in their industry. The winner will be determined by a public vote, based on a shortlist compiled by the *SmartCompany* team. In 2025, this award was won by Raffy Sgroi, founder and CEO of Car Mechanical Services.



Entering – and winning! – the category awards

A category shortlist is chosen internally before guest judges score the entries based on the following criteria:

CONTEXT /10

How well does the entry demonstrate a clear understanding of the challenges in its category and the solutions it offers?

EXECUTION /10

How well did the business demonstrate an effective and unique approach to its situation?

IMPACT /10

From the answers, was the business successful with a long-term positive impact?

PITCH, PRESENTATION AND PROMOTION /10

Was the entry properly and clearly submitted?

VALUES /10

How well did the entry understand and exhibit the Smart50 values of innovation, resilience and community?

Ongoing communication

By entering the Smart50 Awards, you are accepting our terms and conditions and agree to share your contact details with the sponsor of the event, in [accordance with our privacy policy](#). You also agree to receive relevant communications from *SmartCompany* and its partners.

Entrants will be able to opt out at any time from marketing communications via a preference page.

For more details on how your data is protected, please refer to [SmartCompany's privacy policy](#).

PAYMENT

Entry fee of \$200 + GST per entry closes on Friday, August 28, 2026.

Late entry fee of \$250 + GST per entry closes on Friday, September 4, 2026.

Payment will be collected upon the completion and submission of your entry.

All entry fees are non-refundable regardless of the circumstances, including disqualification, withdrawal, or the jury choosing not to shortlist an entry.

FAIR USE OF RESPONSES, IMAGERY AND SUPPORTING COLLATERAL

By entering the Smart50, entrants understand that all responses and images may be used by our editorial team.

- **SmartCompany will publish the provided revenue figures of all 50 companies that make the Smart50 list.** There is an example on the following page. Requests to remove this information will be denied.
- Images and information provided in the entry questionnaire are to be used across *SmartCompany* and partner websites, and may be used in Smart50 marketing materials.
- Information you provide will be used to create your Smart50 profile article if you place in the 2026 list or win any Smart50 Awards.
- Your responses may also be used in *SmartCompany's* business news and thought leadership coverage.

- *SmartCompany* has editorial control over this information, and may publish this across its channels without notifying you, and may refuse requests for edits.
- You can make updates to your entries before the final entry closing date of Friday, September 4, but any prior material used in *SmartCompany* coverage will not be updated to reflect your changes.
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all details, images and supporting documents are factually correct before submitting.
- Where misleading information is supplied, regardless of intention, we reserve the right to disqualify entries.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the SmartCompany website. The page features a navigation menu with categories like Finance, Startups, Tech, Ai, Opinion, Video, Events & Training, Smart50, and Ask Us Anything-. The main content area is titled '2. York St Brands' under the 'SMART50 AWARDS 2025' section. The article text states: 'York St Brands started as an answer for customers who had, for years, been ignored or made to feel shame by traditional beauty brands. Here's how it fared at the 2025 Smart50 Awards.' Below the text, there is a metadata line: 'SMARTCOMPANY · NOV 13, 2025 · 2 MIN READ'. There are also buttons for 'Share' and 'Prefer SmartCompany'. A large image shows three people: a man in a dark suit, a woman in a black blazer, and a woman in a white blazer. Below the image is a caption: 'L-R: York St Brands CEO Craig Schweighoffer, CFO Bridget Mitchell and managing director Rachael Wilde. Source: York St Brands'. At the bottom of the article, there are two statistics: 'Revenue: \$33.4 million' and 'Growth: 158%'.

Judging

The jurors reserve the right to reallocate an entry into another category if they feel it has been entered into an inappropriate category.

The jurors' decision is final unless new information comes to light after judging, in which case a ruling may be made by the organisers in consultation with jurors.

Inclusion in the awards is at the discretion of *SmartCompany*, and decisions are final.

Failure to comply with any terms and conditions may result in the application being ineligible for the 2026 *SmartCompany* Smart50 Awards.

The results of the Smart50 Awards are final, and no negotiations will be entered into regarding the results unless evidence emerges nullifying the eligibility of list place holders.

[Read the full terms and conditions](#)

Please direct any questions to events@smartcomedia.com.au



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