

29 September 2016

Media Release

Canterbury winners at NZ Tourism Awards

A man who has helped transform Hanmer into a 'spa town' and an eco-tourism pioneer are the two Canterbury winners in this year's New Zealand Tourism Awards, announced tonight.

Graeme Abbot, General Manager of Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa, won the Tourism Industry Champion Award, supported by Sudima Hotels & Resorts, and Black Cat Cruises won the Business Excellence Award – annual turnover less than \$6 million, supported by Westpac.

The Awards were presented at a black tie dinner in Auckland attended by more than 300 tourism industry leaders and supporters. The Awards Programme is owned and organised by Tourism Industry Aotearoa with the Awards night put on with the assistance of partners Air New Zealand and the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment.

The Air New Zealand Supreme Tourism Award was won by Rotorua Canopy Tours, a business that mixes thrills and conservation, taking visitors on small group journeys into an ancient native forest, using walking rails, treetop platforms, swinging bridges and ziplines. Rotorua Canopy Tours also won the Visitor Experience Award, supported by ServiceIQ, and the Environmental Tourism Award supported by Mercury. It's the second consecutive year a Rotorua operator has won the top Award.

The industry's most prestigious individual award, the Sir Jack Newman Award, supported by Crowe Horwath International, went to George Hickton, the man who drove the development of the tourism industry's 100% Pure New Zealand international marketing brand. It was Mr Hickton's most outstanding achievement during his successful 10 years as Chief Executive of Tourism New Zealand from 1999 to 2009. The judges said 17 years on, 100% Pure is the envy of tourism organisations around the world and Mr Hickton continues to be an inspirational tourism leader.

TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts says this year's Awards were extremely competitive, a reflection of a buoyant industry that is pumping billions of dollars into communities up and down the country and supporting several hundred thousand jobs.

He says the awards programme is closely aligned to the tourism industry's Tourism 2025 growth framework which aspires to grow annual tourism revenue to \$41 billion by 2025.

"We had entries from big corporates to small businesses, ranging from one operator that has been in business for over 100 years to our Supreme Award winner, an exciting young company that has an outstanding visitor experience at the heart of its success.

"It was fantastic to see winners from across the regions, including Canterbury."

TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

Level 4, 79 Boulcott Street, PO Box 1697, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

P +64 4 499 0104 www.tia.org.nz E info@tia.org.nz

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#)

About the Canterbury Award winners:

Graeme Abbot, winner of the: Tourism Industry Champion Award, supported by Sudima Hotels & Resorts

Graeme has been General Manager of the extremely successful Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa for 16 years.

The Awards judges said this passionate and business savvy tourism champion has delivered great results for the council-owned spa complex, the local Hanmer community and the wider Canterbury tourism industry.

Under Graeme's leadership the pool and spa's physical size has expanded by 50%, annual visitor numbers have accelerated to more than half a million and annual turnover has more than doubled to \$11 million.

The judges praised Graeme's personal integrity and his success in transforming Hanmer into a 'spa town'.

Black Cat Cruises, winner of the: Business Excellence Award – annual turnover less than \$6 million, supported by Westpac

Black Cat Cruises is one of the South Island's biggest cruise companies. Each year more than 150,000 customers experience a nature cruise, dolphin swim or ferry ride on one of its modern vessels on Akaroa or Lyttelton Harbour.

The judges said over three decades Black Cat Cruises has risen from humble beginnings into a tourism industry success story. It has just celebrated its 30th year in business, its most successful yet!

An eco-tourism pioneer, it has demonstrated real longevity in a tough environment. It responded to the challenge of rebuilding visitors to Akaroa and the wider region after the Canterbury earthquakes decimated visitor numbers.

The judges were extremely impressed with Black Cat Cruises and its commitment to its staff, visitors, the environment and the local Akaroa community.

For more information go to www.tourismawards.org.nz

For more information and photos from the winners or the Awards presentation contact:

Ann-Marie Johnson
Communications Manager
TIA
Email ann-marie.johnson@tia.org.nz
Mobile 027 600 4565
www.tia.org.nz

TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

Level 4, 79 Boulcott Street, PO Box 1697, Wellington 6140, New Zealand
P +64 4 499 0104 www.tia.org.nz E info@tia.org.nz
[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#)

New Zealand Tourism Awards 2016 Winners

- **Air New Zealand Supreme Tourism Industry Award, and Environmental Tourism Award, supported by Mercury, and Visitor Experience Award, supported by ServiceIQ**
Rotorua Canopy Tours
- **Sir Jack Newman Award (outstanding industry leader) supported by Crowe Horwath International**
George Hickton, Wellington
- **Emerging Tourism Leader Award, supported by PATA New Zealand Trust**
Bradley Garnett, SKYCITY Entertainment Group, Auckland
- **Tourism Industry Champion Award, supported by Sudima Hotels & Resorts**
Graeme Abbot, Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa
- **Business Excellence Award – annual turnover less than \$6 million, supported by Westpac**
Black Cat Cruises, Canterbury
- **Business Excellence Award – annual turnover more than \$6 million, supported by JLT & AIG**
Hobbiton Movie Set & Farm Tours, Waikato
- **Industry Alignment Award, supported by the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment**
Destination Rotorua
- **Maori Cultural Tourism Award, supported by Auckland Tourism, Events & Economic Development**
Waitangi Treaty Grounds
- **People’s Choice Award, supported by NZME.**
Hobbiton Movie Set & Farm Tours, Waikato
- **Tourism 2025 Enabler Award, supported by Auckland Airport**
Angus & Associates Ltd
- **Tourism Marketing Campaign Award, supported by Spark**
Hobbiton Movie Set & Farm Tours

TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

Level 4, 79 Boulcott Street, PO Box 1697, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

P +64 4 499 0104 www.tia.org.nz E info@tia.org.nz

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#)

Thanks

TIA thanks key New Zealand Tourism Awards 2016 Partners & Supporters:

Award Partners: Air New Zealand and the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment

Award Supporters: PATA New Zealand Trust, Sudima Hotels & Resorts, Westpac, JLT & AIG, Mercury, Auckland Tourism, Events & Economic Development, Auckland Airport, Spark, and ServiceIQ

Event Supporters: Department of Conservation, Mission Estate Winery, Black Market, Monteiths, Epay, PATA International & Official Media Partner, NZME.

KEY FACTS

- Tourism in New Zealand is an \$81.6 million per day industry. Tourism delivers around \$32 million in foreign exchange to the New Zealand economy each day of the year. Domestic tourism contributes another \$49 million in economic activity every day
- Tourism is one of New Zealand's biggest export industries, earning \$11.8 billion or 17.4% of New Zealand's foreign exchange earnings (year ended March 2015)
- 12.1% of the total number of people employed in New Zealand work directly or indirectly in tourism. That means 295,908 people are working in the visitor economy
- The [Tourism 2025](#) growth framework has a goal of growing total tourism revenue to \$41 billion a year by 2025.

Visit www.tia.org.nz for more information

TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

Level 4, 79 Boulcott Street, PO Box 1697, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

P +64 4 499 0104 www.tia.org.nz E info@tia.org.nz

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [LinkedIn](#)