

21 June 2019
Media release

Top hoteliers recognised in 2019 NZ Hotel Industry Awards

Leading hoteliers from Auckland and Queenstown have taken out the top titles in the 2019 New Zealand Hotel Industry Awards, while a Christchurch hotel has been recognised for its environmental efforts.

High performing staff and managers from hotels in Rotorua, Dunedin and Wellington have also been named in the Awards, announced at a gala dinner in Auckland last night. The Awards capped off the two day New Zealand Hotel Industry Conference, co-hosted by Horwath HTL and Tourism Industry Aotearoa.

These prestigious awards celebrate the achievements of the exceptional individuals who work in New Zealand hotels in roles ranging from Front Office Services to General Manager, as well as a hotel with an outstanding environmental initiative.

The judging process selected candidates who demonstrated a number of factors, such as receiving recognition from hotel guests beyond the norm, demonstrating a remarkable commitment to their employer, having undergone training to further their career, and personal attributes such as personality, problem solving, and anticipating guests' needs.

Twelve individuals were singled out for awards, with General Manager of the Year going to Jeremy Healy of Sofitel Auckland Viaduct Harbour, while Novotel Auckland Airport General Manager Paul Columbus was named Senior Hotel Executive of the Year.

The judges said both winners stood out for their leadership and for displaying a passion for their work that saw them go beyond the call of duty.

Mr Healy was described as a consummate hotelier, a dedicated individual who never stops trying to improve product standards and service delivery. Passionate and committed, he goes above and beyond, leading his team to deliver exceptional personalised experiences.

He has been instrumental in developing luxury talent and capability across the region through sharing best practice and mentoring new General Managers, as well as supporting those who would like to grow their career in luxury hospitality.

His drive for excellence is consistently demonstrated in the hotel's profit, employee, guest and sustainability performance measures.

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The judges said Mr Columbus embodied the complete package of a senior hotel executive. As well as achieving outstanding financial performance, he is at the forefront of delivering people culture, innovation and commitment to excellence in his hotel portfolio, and is a wholehearted ambassador for the New Zealand tourism industry.

He plays an active role in the wider Auckland hotel sector, as a member of Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development's Destination committee, and is in his fifth year as Auckland regional hotel sector chair for TIA.

Matt McDonald from Queenstown's Millbrook Resort was awarded Outstanding Young Hotel Executive of the Year.

Mr McDonald is Food & Beverage Operations Manager at Millbrook, where he has successfully reduced staff turnover in his department and more than doubled profitability. The judges were particularly impressed by the time he puts into developing local hospitality students who may never even work for him.

He believes that by enthusing future workers, he is helping grow industry talent. He wants future generations to see hospitality work as an enjoyable, rewarding and successful career path which they can thrive in, just as he has.

The award for environmental initiative of the year went to Sudima Christchurch Airport, the first CarboNZero accredited hotel in the South Island. There is strong engagement across the hotel in reducing the property's environmental footprint, involving every team member from gardening, housekeeping, engineering, food and beverage, and front office.

Environmental sustainability is a long journey but Sudima Christchurch Airport is making determined progress, with continuous, incremental changes to meet its environmental objectives.

A new Award introduced this year, for the Hotel Industry Technology Employee of the Year, went to Ella Blake, Assistant Hotel Manager of the Bolton Hotel, Wellington. The Award recognises someone who has made an exceptional contribution in championing a technology project that has led to increased guest satisfaction and operational efficiency.

Ms Blake has been instrumental in leading a project to introduce interconnected technology projects at the Bolton, including a guest app, and making sure they all work seamlessly together. The judges said the technology projects impact on every department across the hotel and Ms Blake has had to be innovative to ensure they deliver.

Horwath HTL Director Stephen Hamilton says many categories in this year's awards were closely contested, giving the judges a difficult task.

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"It was clear that a lot of time and effort went into preparing many of the nominations, so the judges had plenty of good information to make their decisions," he says.

TIA Hotel Sector Manager Sally Attfield, says the calibre of the 39 Award finalists and 13 winners is a reflection of the exceptional individuals working in New Zealand hotels and the strong results the sector has been achieving.

"They show our hotel sector is in good heart and is providing people with excellent career opportunities across a range of disciplines," she says.

The full list of 2019 New Zealand Hotel Industry Award winners is:

Hotel Industry General Manager of the Year, sponsored by AHS Hospitality

- Jeremy Healy, General Manager, Sofitel Auckland Viaduct Harbour

Hotel Industry Senior Hotel Executive of the Year, sponsored by Dalman Architects of Space

- Paul Columbus, General Manager, Novotel Auckland Airport

Hotel Industry Outstanding Young Hotel Executive of the Year, sponsored by Sparkle Master Drycleaners

- Matt McDonald, Food & Beverage Operations Manager, Millbrook Resort, Queenstown

Hotel Industry Environmental Initiative of the Year

- Sudima Christchurch Airport

Hotel Industry Technology Employee of the Year, sponsored by GuestTraction

- Ella Blake, Assistant Hotel Manager, Bolton Hotel, Wellington

Hotel Industry Administration Employee of the Year

- Nicolette van Lieshout, Building Futures Project Manager, Accor New Zealand Regional Office

Hotel Industry Concierge of the Year, sponsored by Sparkle Master Drycleaners

- Frederique Irion, Concierge, Cordis, Auckland

Hotel Industry Food and Beverage Employee of the Year

- Bonn Tucker, Food and Beverage Supervisor, Scenic Hotel Southern Cross, Dunedin

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Hotel Industry Front Office Services Employee of the Year, sponsored by the New Zealand School of Tourism

- Kevin Dias, Front Office Manager, Sudima Auckland Airport

Hotel Industry Housekeeper Employee of the Year, sponsored by Vendella

- Nicolas Souto, Executive Housekeeper, Millbrook Resort, Queenstown

Hotel Industry Regional Hotel Employee of the Year, sponsored by Linenmaster

- Edward Judd, General Manager, Novotel & ibis Rotorua

Hotel Industry Revenue Manager of the Year, sponsored by ARMA

- Mark Nixon, Revenue and Reservations Manager, Bolton Hotel, Wellington

Hotel Industry Sales, Marketing & Distribution Employee of the Year, sponsored by Fastrack Digital

- Elizabeth Burrett, Marketing Manager, SKYCITY Hotels, Sky Tower and Tourism, SKYCITY Entertainment Group

About the co-hosts

Tourism Industry Aotearoa Hotel Sector

TIA's hotel sector represents the interests of over 180 members throughout New Zealand, including international chains, large independent and privately owned hotels. TIA hotel sector members employ over 12,000 staff nationally, with annual revenues of almost \$1.7 billion. TIA's hotel members contribute to a monthly performance survey conducted by the Fresh Information Company.

Horwath HTL

Horwath HTL is a consulting firm specialising in the hotel, tourism, and leisure industries, providing specialist consulting services to a wide range of private sector clients and public sector stakeholders, including developers, investors, funders, owners, and operators. Horwath HTL is affiliated with Crowe Global, a network of more than 140 independent accounting and advisory services firms with 560 offices in more than 100 countries.

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