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**Media Release:**

**2013 Westpac Northland Business Excellence Awards - Winners announcement**

Westpac Northland Business Excellence Awards for 2013 took place at the Forum North on Friday night. Entrant numbers exceeded last year's Awards with 55 Northland businesses competing in 6 business categories, 5 ancillary categories and an overall supreme winner.

Far North Fuels Ltd was the Supreme 2013 Westpac Northland Business of the Year and also took out the Henderson Reeves Connell Rishworth Excellence in Business Small Business Awards (4-9FTE) Award Category.

The judges said...

*Far North Fuels have identified a sliver of a niche and exploited it really well, creating an opportunity to create excellent profits driven by a strong turnover. They are committed to the smart use of technology, which has enabled them to maximize profits in a low margin, high volume business. Through the involvement of an external board with independent directors, they have demonstrated strong strategic planning to grow their business, plans which are enacted and then monitored throughout the organisation. They have identified the risks they face moving forwards and have put plans in place to mitigate these. This has enabled them to grow from a small Northland based business to one which now services the entire country.*

Tony Collins from the Northland Chamber of Commerce said that the awards were a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the success of many Northland businesses. These enterprises were of varying size and often very different in structure and scale. The one thing they all had in common was their passion for what they were doing and their commitment to succeed.

Other winners were

- The Bream Head Conservation Trust - winner of the Konica Minolta Excellence in Business Owner Operator (1-3FTE) Category. (Finalists Activ8 NZ Ltd, Waipoua Lodge)

The judges said...

*The Bream Head Conservation Trust stands out for its outstanding level of connection with the community and all key stakeholders.*

*The Trust exhibited sound planning and monitoring. There are clearly defined goals and strategies. These are well implemented and monitored to ensure success.*

*The Trust has strong evidence of a well thought out long term plan with processes and structures aligned to this. We look forward to seeing further success with regards to protecting and improving this iconic Northland landscape.  
Business.*



- Far North Fuels winner of the Henderson Reeves Connell Rishworth Excellence in Business Small Business Awards (4-9FTE). (Finalists Griffiths and Associates Ltd, Shiraz Indian Restaurant, Totalspan Northland)

The judges said...

*Far North Fuels have created a profitable business through the smart use of technology to maximise margins in a high volume business. Their growth both in turnover and profit has been achieved through strategic planning and targeted sales activity which has resulted in large contracts being secured. They have identified the potential risks they face and considered how these may be mitigated to protect their business and have made good use of external directors to improve their organisation. They now provide services not just in Northland, but throughout country from their Kerikeri headquarters.*

- The Rintoul Group Ltd - winner of the Golden Bay Cement Excellence in Business Medium Business Award (10-24FTE). (Finalist Tui Technology Ltd)

The judges said...

*While this was a very closely fought category, the judges were impressed with the new life being breathed into the winning business, the work towards diversifying income streams and reducing risk, the innovation being shown in a long established traditional business, staff buy-in, environmental awareness and community involvement, and the ability of management to analyse and reduce costs in the business.*

- McDonalds Whangarei - winner of the Refining NZ Excellence in Business Large Business Award (25 plus FTE) (Finalists Northpine Ltd, South Pacific Industrial Ltd)

The judges said...

*While they operate within an established framework, the management team demonstrated their exceptional knowledge of staffing, systems, products and customers at a local level, and clearly maximise the use of available resources at a management level. There are good relationships amongst the leadership team and with staff, they have succession planning in place following an issue which created a gap in their management team, and had the foresight to close a branch that was less successful to enable growth in other areas. They work hard on their relationship with their local communities and it was difficult to fault their performance*



- Homekill Services Ltd - winner of the Business Coaching New Zealand Best Emerging Business Award. (Finalist Real Estate with Pauline Dinsdale)

The judges said...

*The emerging category covers a range of businesses, with some being the creation of a new business while others are new to the owner but existing businesses; therefore the business doing both sets itself a very high standard indeed.*

*Home Kill services took on an existing business, decided to maintain the brand, change the customers perception of the industry and retain the existing team while implementing these changes. Their success has been through a combination of excellent business processes resulting in a great understanding of their customer needs and tailoring the business to meet these (all your meat and no mix ups). There is a strong leadership focussed on transitioning the team to a new way while investing significantly (both in the business and of their family) to show how serious they are about change.*

- The Bream Head Conservation Trust - winner of the Top Energy Best Not-For-Profit Organisation Award. (Finalist The Kauri Museum)
- The Bream Head Conservation Trust - winner of the Northland Regional Council Sustainable Business Award.
- There were joint winners of the ACC Workplace Safety Award. They were Northpine Ltd and Skydive Ballistic Blondes (Finalist Dive North)

The judges said...

### **Northpine**

*Northpine not only demonstrates their commitment to Health & Safety through holding the Tertiary level certification of WSMP but also extends it to the health aspect of H&S (often poor cousin of the two factors) by adding the human factors into their staff by offering life skills through literacy and numeracy training and even starting in 2014, the banking and legal aspects too.*

*In addition there are a host of award opportunities for the 46 staff at the company such as the "Good Mate" and the "Einstein" Award's but the latest innovation for Health & Safety related ideas is currently called the "Florence Nightingale" award; although the actual name is yet to be finalised!*

*Health & Safety training is a strong point too with data being used from incidents to drive the training focus and this aligns well with the Unit Standards and the 35 National Certificates awarded at the company this year.*

*Northpine demonstrated a commitment to Health & Safety not just through its processes but also in how it involves and communicates strongly with its people.*



The judges said...

### **Skydive Ballistic Blondes**

*Kelly and her team impressed the judges with their ongoing commitment to health and safety, particularly in looking after the welfare of what is sometimes a transient workforce. They celebrate success as a team that is seen as a close-knit family and have had no major incidents since their inception in 2005. Staff are given ambitious training plans to take them to increased levels of competency e.g. that of instructor, and this is given through different methods of training, including CAA safety days and risk-based scenarios for pilot training. Skydive's commitment to their customer's safety was also evident from the strict selection criteria adhered to for 'less fit' clients. Well done Skydive. Keep up the great work and we wish you well for future years.*

*The judges recognise you have been proactive towards health and safety and congratulate you on the work you have done. This includes the investment you are putting into your staff with regard to training and taking them to higher levels of responsibility. You allow your workers to attend voluntary CAA safety days and continually look at ways of improving your knowledge.*

*We are impressed how you celebrate success in your business and involve everyone in what appears to be a 'close-knit' family.*

- Donna Blaber Author/ Lighthouse Media - winner of the Creative Northland in Excellence in Arts Business (Finalists Dawn Dutton Photography and Think Tank Creative)

The judges said...

*Not content to rest on previous product success this arts business demonstrates a unique blend of skills coming together to produce a unique product line after clearly identifying a niche in the market.*

*The business capitalises on the strengths of both partners talents to produce a simple product that has a wide appeal. Bypassing traditional retail outlets to capture a wider audience they have been able to build a place in the market, but not without thinking cleverly about both the products support material and promotional collateral.*

*This together with the enthusiasm by the owner for the product makes it a clear winner.*



- Northpine Ltd took out the Northland INC Judges Commendation Award.

The judges said...

*Northpine's decision to invest heavily in state of the art equipment just before the GFC - which they could not have foreseen - left the company in a position that was not for the faint-hearted. Sheer determination, belief in themselves and rigorous adherence to the principles of business excellence, have kept the company on track. The judges were inspired by the passion of the owners and managers to keep the business moving forward, and the great relationships between staff and management through what have been very difficult times for this organisation.*

- Conex was voted More FM Customer's Choice Service Provider while McCoy & Thomas Hunting & Fishing Kaitaia was the More FM Customer's Choice retail provider.

The Northern Advocate Business Hall of Fame inductee this year was Michael Springford in recognition of his contribution to Northland business.

For more information visit the awards website [www.northlandbusinessawards.co.nz](http://www.northlandbusinessawards.co.nz) or contact the New Zealand Chambers of Commerce Northland.

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