

2021 Taituarā Awards, Scholarship and Exchanges

Each year Taituarā holds a Gala Dinner to showcase and celebrate the outstanding people and mahi that contribute to the success of the local government sector.

This year we distributed seven Excellence Awards, including a Supreme Award, a leadership scholarship to Melbourne Business School, an Emerging Leader of the Year Awards, two awards for managers to visit overseas councils, and an award for a winning management challenge team.

Below is some information on all the recipients.

2021 LGFA Taituarā Excellence Awards

The LGFA Supreme Award

The Winner is:

Western Bay of Plenty District for Transfer of Ownership of Panepane Purakau

Transfer of Ownership of Panepane Purakau is also the winner of the Minister of Local Government's Award for Council/Community Relations. Further information about the project and what the judges said about it can be found below under the Council/Community Relations category.

Previous Winners:

- 2015 Selwyn District Council, Project Helix
- 2016 Hamilton City Council, Council Transforms A City Dump – The Restoration of Hamilton Gardens
- 2017 Waimakariri District Council, Draft Waimakariri Red Zone Recovery Plan
- 2018 Waikato Regional Council, Kawe Kōrero
- 2019 Auckland Council, Kia Puāwai
- 2020 Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Te Arawa Catfish Killas
- 2021 Western Bay of Plenty District, Transfer of Ownership of Panepane Purakau

About the Sponsor:

The New Zealand Local Government Funding Agency (LGFA) specialises in financing the New Zealand local government sector, the primary purpose being to provide more efficient funding costs and diversified funding sources for New Zealand local authorities. LGFA was established to raise debt on behalf of the local government sector in a cost-effective manner.

This is the first year that the Local Government Funding Agency has sponsored the Supreme Award, and the seventh year they have supported the Excellence Awards (having been the sponsor of the Transforming Service Delivery Category).

The Buddle Findlay Award for Bicultural Leadership

This Award recognises programmes, projects or initiatives that demonstrate outstanding results from working in partnership with Māori. Entries may come from any area of local government activity but must be able to demonstrate a commitment to partnership with Māori.

The Winner is:

Waikato Regional Council for Transfer of Functions to an Iwi Authority under s33 RMA

About the Winner:

Section 33 of the Resource Management Act allows a local authority to transfer any one or more of its functions under that Act to an iwi authority. Waikato Regional Council reached a landmark decision to transfer water quality monitoring functions to Tūwharetoā Māori Trust Board. We are advised this is the first transfer of its kind since the Act was introduced in 1991.

The Judges said:

We commend the Council and Tūwharetoā for their leadership in overcoming the practical barriers to transfers in this way. It shows the results of out of the box thinking and a huge investment of mutual respect and trust.

Last Year's Winner:

Bay of Plenty Regional Council and Te Arawa Lakes Trust, Te Arawa Catfish Killas

About the Sponsor:

Buddle Findlay is one of New Zealand's leading commercial and public law firms with a significant local government practice.

The BERL Award for Collaborative Government Action

This Award recognises outstanding results that have been achieved through local authorities working with other government agencies. This category could include programmes or projects from any area, provided there is a demonstrable community benefit, and the approach is transferable to other local authorities.

The Winner is:

Hastings District Council for Hastings District Council's Place Based Housing Solution

About the Winner:

In five years, the waitlist for social housing in Hastings has increased from 57 people to approximately 640. The Place Based Housing Solution is the result of a conversation between the council, the Crown, iwi, NGOs and social service providers that has tackled an interwoven series of complex housing needs. The solution includes planning, urban design, social service delivery and funding solutions.

The Judges said:

Housing is New Zealand's largest public policy challenge, but its effects are felt primarily at a local level. This is an excellent example of a council taking a leadership role to identify a local issue and mobilise a diverse collection of actors to deliver an outcome in actual bricks and mortar. This is another example of the community-based solution that Parliament intended when it restored well-being to the statutory purpose of local government in 2019.

Highly Commended Citation:

Tauranga City Council for Notice of Change (NOC) Project

About the Entry:

The NOC project was a collaboration between Tauranga City Council and Land Information New Zealand that has transformed how solicitors notify councils and LINZ of changes in ownership. The result is a single seamless process that promotes efficiencies in the land sale process and the integrity of the land transfer and property tax systems.

The Judges said:

The NOC project has provided a practical solution to an issue that had been a pain point for the property industry and local authorities (among others) for some years. It's capable of being picked up by every local authority in the country. We also noted significant elements of the project were advanced during last year's level four alert.

Last Year's Winner

Bay of Plenty Regional Council for Kopeopeo Canal Remediation Project

About the Sponsor:

BERL is the leading provider of a broad range of economic research, analysis, advice and consultancy for business enterprises, organisations, iwi, institutions, community groups, industry associations and public sector clients in New Zealand. BERL is a Taituarā Principal Partner.

This is the sixth year BERL has sponsored the Collaborative Government Action category.

The Minister of Local Government's Award for Excellence in Council/Community Relations

This Award recognises programmes, projects or initiatives that demonstrate outstanding results through excellent community engagement or community empowerment. Entries may come from any area of local government activity, but must have community engagement, empowerment, or partnership as a key aspect, especially those undertaken over and above statutory requirements. Entries may include successful collaboration with private or community organisations. The approach taken must be capable of transfer to other local authorities.

The Winner is:

Western Bay of Plenty District Council for Transfer of Ownership of Panepane Purakau

About the Entry:

This initiative involved the Council returning 172 hectares of land known as Panepane Purakau to the five hāpu of Matakana Island through a negotiation and a significant community engagement process. This included not only the return of the land but the retention of some land as a public reserve, rights of access to beach and wharf, navigation and some Council retention of rights to harvest mature trees.

The Judges said:

The return of Panepane Purakau is an exemplary initiative of successful engagement with Māori. There are strong elements of co-design of a proposed way forward, appropriate investments in relationships before the engagement begins, being prepared to commit the time and resource necessary to succeed and seeking a win-win solution. We commend the partners for working together to right an historical wrong that fell outside the Treaty settlement process.

Last Year's Winner

Rotorua Lakes Council for the 2019 Rotorua Child Equity Programme Pilot

About the Sponsor:

The Department of Internal Affairs is the sponsor for this category. The Department serves and connects people, communities and government to build safe, prosperous and respected nation. This includes a role as the Government's chief policy advisors on the local government system.

This is the fourth year the Department has sponsored a category in the Excellence Awards, and the third year it has sponsored this category (previously it sponsored the now discontinued Innovation in Asset Management category).

The Capability Group Award for Excellence in Organisation and People Development

This Award recognises approaches that build an exceptional organisational culture or capability through the application of transformational leadership.

Entries in this category might be multi-year programmes or one-off projects but they will involve organisational redesign, human resource management, leadership development or other means of building organisational or staff capability. The approach must be capable of transfer to other local authorities.

The Winner Is:

Whangarei District Council for Whangarei's Organisational Strategy

About the Winner:

The Whangarei Organisational Strategy is a ground-up development to build a more inclusive, cohesive and effective organisation. The strategy had been driven (somewhat unusually) by the second and third tier managers across the organisation.

The Judges said:

The success of any organisational strategy project lies in embedding it in the day-to-day operation of councils. Getting the second and third tier managers to drive strategy development is an innovative means of generating buy-in at managerial level. We were also struck that the cross-departmental whanau groups have 'stuck' after that strategy went live. We look forward to hearing more of the progress of this initiative in coming years.

Last Year's Winner:

Central Hawkes Bay District Council for Together We Thrive! E Ora Ngātahi Ana

About the Sponsor:

Capability Group is a provider of professional development opportunities that transform individuals and workplace cultures. Capability Group partners with Taituarā to develop leadership capabilities within the local government sector.

This is the fourth year that Capability Group has sponsored the Excellence in Organisation and People Development category.

The MartinJenkins Award for Better Policy and Regulation

This Award recognises the development of robust and effective evidence-based policy or local regulatory initiatives. Any policy, plan or regulatory initiative is eligible for this award. Entrants will be expected to clearly demonstrate their initiative was based on a robust problem or issue definition, evaluation of one or more options, the development of an evidence base and that the initiative is transferable to other local authorities.

The Winner Is:

Far North District Council for Nothing but Net

About the Winner:

Nothing but Net is a digital strategy, purpose built by Far North communities focussed on finding a solution to the digital divide. We are advised that the approach has been accepted by all Northland councils as a foundation document for the region as a whole to build on.

The Judges said:

We commend Far North for its application of a sound co-design methodology and a new (to NZ) online engagement tool. We also recognise the Council's willingness to walk the talk and change its own internal service offerings.

The Council's recognition that digital connectivity is of only limited value without sufficient levels of digital literacy to take best advantage of the opportunity. We look forward to hearing more of the progress of the rollout, and of the steps Council and community take to developing digital literacy in the Far North.

Last Year's Winner:

Porirua City Council for At the Heart of Our City: Strategic Framework for Children and Young People in Porirua

About the Sponsor:

MartinJenkins works at the intersection of government and business, helping organisations navigate and implement policy, regulatory and organisation change to improve organisational performance and the lives of all New Zealanders.

MartinJenkins is an organisation made up of people who want to be of service. They have an investment in excellence that goes beyond just getting the job done.

This is the first year that MartinJenkins has sponsored the Better Policy and Regulation category.

The Datacom Award for Transforming Service Delivery

This Award is for programmes or projects that result in an exceptional service experience through new delivery models or the redesign of business processes or practices. The programme or project can relate to any area of council activity which is about delivering improved value for money to ratepayers. The approach must be capable of transfer to other local authorities.

The Winner is:

Selwyn District Council for A World Class Customer Experience Transformation Project

About the Winner:

This was a programme of customer service transformation – including the construction of a customer service centre, inculcating a customer culture, and enhancing the skills of the customer service staff. This was achieved in six months with the Council having achieved its efficiency and customer service targets in the first year.

The Judges said:

This was a highly transferable total transformation of the Council's public-facing services. It blends digital transformation culture change, and skill/knowledge-based development into a story with a particularly compelling before and after. To take just one example – before the transformation one customer query in five was answered at first contact with the Council, after the transformation four in five are.

Highly Commended Citation

Tauranga City Council for Trail rider

About the Entry:

Trail rider is an all-terrain wheelchair that provides an opportunity for those with mobility needs to access sites, heights and views that were previously inaccessible. Originally designed to provide a means of transport on walking tracks on and around Mauao, Trail rider is now available to use throughout the Bay of Plenty.

The Judges Said:

Local authorities are constantly aware of the need to make public services as accessible as possible. Trail rider extends accessibility to a wider range of outdoor services and can be picked up by any council with a public park, reserve, zoo or similar. A further demonstration that excellence in local government doesn't necessarily mean a huge investment of time or dollars.

Last Year's Winner:

Auckland Council for Request for Service

About the Sponsor:

Datacom is the country's largest and longest serving technology company. It delivers an ever-green service called Datascape to local councils which contains a wealth of intellectual property built from our multi-year success within local government.

This is the first year that Datacom has sponsored the Transforming Service Delivery category.

GHD Award for Environmental Leadership

This Award recognises programmes, projects, or initiatives that provide tangible benefits to the environment, or showcase leading practice in managing environmental impacts in the local community. The approach must be capable of transfer to other local authorities.

The Winner is:

Eke Panuku Development Auckland for Te Ara Awataha
(this is the first time since 2012 that a council-controlled organisation has won an Excellence Award)

About the Winner:

Te Ara Awataha is the name gifted by Mana Whenua for a 1.5 km green corridor project that will link existing parks, town centre, schools, and homes, regenerate a degraded natural taonga and generate other environmental benefits.

The Judges said:

Te Ara Awataha captured our attention for its interweaving of Te Ao Māori, urban design and environmental remediation principles. It is a collaborative piece of placemaking that goes beyond just a physical corridor to employment, social procurement and educational objectives. A project that demonstrates a regard for all four dimensions of well-being.

Highly Commended Citation:

Greater Wellington Regional Council for Greater Wellington's Low Carbon Acceleration Fund

About the Entry:

Greater Wellington has a target of being carbon neutral by 2030 and climate positive by 2035 (i.e., sequestering more carbon than emitted). The Fund is a pool of money set aside to fund activities or initiatives that reduce emissions faster or at a greater scale.

The Judges said:

This is an innovative, yet practical, way for councils to show leadership in climate change mitigation at limited additional cost to ratepayers. We commend the Council for its attention to design detail and look forward to hearing more of the Council's progress against its targets in future years.

Last Year's Winner:

This is a new category.

About the Sponsor:

GHD recognises and understands the world is constantly changing and is committed to solving the world's biggest challenges in the areas of water, energy and urbanisation. GHD is a global professional services company that leads through engineering, construction and architectural expertise. Their forward-looking, innovative approaches connect and sustain communities around the world. Committed to delivering social and economic outcomes, they are focused on designing a smarter, more connected and sustainable future for our communities and building lasting relationships with their partners and clients.

Emerging Leader of the Year Award

The Taituarā Emerging Leader of the Year Award is presented to an up-and-coming leader with a proven track record of designing and delivering innovative and successful programmes, projects, processes or practices with an identifiable community impact.

The recipient will travel to Oregon in the US to attend the 2021 ICMA Conference (pending travel restrictions).

The Recipient is:

Darren de Klerk, Director of Projects and Programmes, Central Hawke's Bay District Council

The Judges said:

The judges were impressed by the scale and significance of the projects that Darren has been involved in, particularly through the #bigwaterstory Capital Works Programme – an \$80 million investment in three waters projects.

Darren's significant community engagement, including strengthening relationships with local iwi and nearby councils is commended. Darren's willingness to share his experience and bring the insights gained to others led to a more collaborate approach throughout the Hawke's Bay community.

Darren has demonstrated a commitment to ongoing personal development, including a commitment to te reo Māori, and nurturing a new team of leaders.

The judges are confident that Darren will continue to contribute as a leader in local government in many forms and for many years to come.

The AskYourTeam Melbourne Business School Leadership Scholarship

The AskYourTeam Melbourne Business School Leadership Scholarship provides a local government chief executive with the opportunity to undertake a leadership programme at the prestigious Melbourne Business School.

The Recipient is:

Louise Miller, Chief Executive, Kaipara District Council

The Judges said:

Louise clearly exemplifies what it means to be a leader in local government. Her experience across the sector and her contribution to intersectorial networks and voluntary initiatives is applauded.

Louise is an active member of Taituarā including as the current Chair of the Workforce Committee and most recently being a panel member at the Marsh Taituarā Risk Management Forum.

Louise articulated her story clearly – sharing insights from early stages of her career and how these influenced her to become a trust-based and authentic leader, and sharing how her ongoing learning has influenced her leadership style further.

Louise has a plan for today, tomorrow and the future, and leading the local government sector to enable change is a big part of it.

Overseas Manager Exchanges

The Taituarā Overseas Manager Exchange Programme is designed to provide local government managers with an opportunity to focus on their management development and career in local government through a short exchange with a partner manager in another country. This is one of a range of Taituarā initiatives that provide leadership and development opportunities specifically tailored to the local government environment.

The Recipient for the Civic Financial Services Overseas Manager Exchange to the US is:

Jason Marris, General Manager of Transformation and Engagement, Kaipara District Council

The Judges said:

Jason clearly articulated and demonstrated how he would be an ambassador for his Council, region, and Aotearoa New Zealand. He was clear on the reciprocal nature of the Overseas Exchange, with specific examples of how he would undertake the cultural exchange element in particular.

Jason's considerable experience in local government, as well as significant contribution to Taituarā, was a stand-out in his application.

Jason's application and the support from his Council, demonstrated that he will continue to grow his leadership across local government into the future.

The Recipient of the Marsh Overseas Manager Exchange to the US is:

Simon Mutonhori, Group Manager – Planning and Regulatory Services, Wairoa District Council

The Judges said:

Simon presented a fascinating narrative of an individual determined to not only make a difference, but to ensure that his contribution is informed through a cultural lens. His dedication to develop his own cultural confidence and commitment to understand multiple world views was obvious, as was the example of how he utilised these skills to make an impact across local government and the community at large.

Simon demonstrated an understanding of the pragmatic and consultative approach needed to effectively engage with the community, particularly within an environmental context.

NZ leg of the JLT Australasian Management Challenge

Each year Taituarā runs the New Zealand leg of the JLT Australasian Management Challenge, Australasia's premier forum for current and emerging local government leaders. The winning team goes on to represent New Zealand at the Australian finals, competing against seven states and territories.

In third place is: Bay of Plenty Regional Council

Flight of the Kotuku were a quietly determined and focussed team who demonstrated effective leadership, good team interaction and collaboration. They were well prepared with good visual resources, including highlighting their areas for growth.

In second place is: Hutt City Council

Hutt City Council worked well together with equal participation across the team. They shared views, celebrated success and encouraged each other.

The winner is: Otago Regional Council, In Our Element

In Our Element demonstrated all the characteristics of a highly effective team – interacting well, demonstrating collaborative behaviour, and including everyone's perspectives. They were supportive, had great energy and laughed together.