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# **Invivo wins Supreme business award, SMEs feature strongly**

Wine and spirits company Invivo Wines has been named the supreme winner at this year's Waikato Business Awards, supported by Foster Construction Group.

The company was named the supreme winner at a sold-out gala dinner at Claudelands tonight celebrating the strength of the Waikato business community. It also won the International Trade Award.

Invivo was founded by friends Tim Lightbourne and Rob Cameron (Invivo's winemaker). The Invivo vision is to produce the best of New Zealand wine and bring this to the world in an innovative and contemporary approach.

Since then, the company has won more than 600 medals and trophies and has teamed up with celebrities Graham Norton and Sarah Jessica Parker to help market their wines and spirits. Headquartered in Te Kauwhata, Invivo has wine operations in New Zealand, Australia, Italy, France, Argentina and produces gin and vodka in Ireland.

Judges said Invivo impressed through its bold approach to marketing, business development, funding, diversification strategies and collaborations with influencers.

"The team understands the art of standing out in a crowded marketplace and this has clearly led to the positive results the company is delivering. For a winery that started in 2008 and saw its real expansion in 2016, delivering in excess of \$20m revenue last year and being profitable is a very commendable achievement, especially given the 700 plus wineries with much longer heritage in New Zealand.

"Their success can be boiled down to two things: focusing on their customers' needs and innovation."

Waikato Chamber of Commerce CEO Don Good said it was heartening to see a raft of SMEs in this year's line-up of finalists and taking out category awards.

"This year's business awards has exceeded our expectations," Good said.

"The increased number of entries and the impressive diversity of participants demonstrates the flourishing entrepreneurial spirit within our region. We had 77 entries – an increase of 11 entries from last year – and of those they were predominantly SMEs."

And of those 77 entries, there was widespread regional representation with entries from as far as Taupō, Whitianga and Te Kauwhata.

Head judge Dr Heather Connolly of the University of Waikato's Management School said there were record entries for the People & Culture and Innovation Awards.

"Awards entries showcased the strength of the export community in the Waikato," Dr Connolly said.

"The Waikato Business Awards have once again proven their importance in recognising and celebrating business excellence in the region."

Gallagher Animal Management's Lisbeth Jacobs won CEO of the Year while Emergency Consult's Jenni Falconer won Emerging Leader of the Year.

Good said it was clear to see that the region is thriving.

"The Waikato is making a name for itself as an economic powerhouse in this country. We have a strong farming foundation, a booming tech industry, strong construction and manufacturing sectors, an uptick in tourism post-Covid, and an efficient and well-located logistics industry. Coupled with our proximity to Auckland opening up enhanced opportunities for trade and collaboration, it makes for a region that really is a terrific place to live, work and play."

A full list of the award winners are as follows:

Business Growth Award (sponsored by Deloitte): **Treadlite NZ**

CEO of the Year Award (sponsored by University of Waikato): **Lisbeth Jacobs, Gallagher Animal Management**

Community Contribution (sponsored by Montana Foods & Events): **South Waikato Investment Fund (SWIFT)**

Emerging Leader of the Year Award (sponsored by Mitre10 Mega): **Jenni Falconer, Emergency Consult**

For Purpose Award (sponsored by Trust Waikato): **Central Kids Early Education**

Innovation Award (sponsored by Company-X): **Emergency Consult**

Marketing Award (sponsored by Chow:Hill Architects): **Pure Lighting**

Micro Business (sponsored by Sleepyhead): **Wyreframe**

People & Culture (sponsored by Hamilton Airport): **Ninja Valley**

Service Excellence (sponsored by Tompkins Wake): **My Mortgage**

Sustainability (sponsored by Wintec Te Pūkenga): **NZ National Fieldays Society Inc**

International Trade Award (sponsored by SkyPoint Technologies): **Invivo Wines**

Supreme winner (sponsored by Foster Construction Group): **Invivo Wines**

Ends

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