

MEDIA RELEASE

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Inaugural Museums Aotearoa Awards, 10 April 2008

Museums Aotearoa will present three awards for excellence at its 2008 annual conference in Dunedin next week.

'The awards are open to Museums Aotearoa's individual and museum members to celebrate the best of our sector achievements,' says Executive Director, Phillipa Tocker.

'We have established these awards because we want to congratulate and publicly recognise the best of the many quiet achievements undertaken by our members. Every day, excellent work and creativity goes on behind the scenes in our museums, public art galleries, science centres and historical societies. Our incredibly skilled and resourceful members are responsible for delivering many outstanding exhibitions, programmes, technological innovations and more, to our local and wider communities. We want to highlight these achievements at our annual professional conference and publicly acknowledge the individuals and organisations who contribute so much to New Zealand's museums and galleries,' Ms Tocker said.

The three award categories are:

- the individual achievement award—for an individual who has made an outstanding contribution, initiative or development that has led to the improvement of an organisation or of the wider museum sector;
- the innovation achievement award—for an individual or team who has made an outstanding contribution towards innovation, particularly through the use of technology; and
- the exhibition/visitor achievement award—for a team or organisation for an outstanding new exhibition and/or visitor programme that contributes to best industry practice in the museum sector, and which demonstrates excellence, relevance and vision.

Award entrants are from all around New Zealand, from Gore in the deep South to Matakoho in the far North. Winning entrants will be able showcase their work at the institutions and organisations they represent.

Finalists for the individual achievement award are Betty Nelley, Collections Manager, at the Kauri Museum in Matakoho; Margaret Cranwell, Exhibitions Manager at Hawkes Bay Cultural Trust, Napier; and Jim Geddes, Head of Arts and Heritage at Gore District Council. Finalists for the innovation and exhibition/visitor achievement awards are the Waiuku Museum Society; Christchurch Art Gallery; Pearson & Associates Architects of Auckland; the Museum of Wellington; and Whanganui Regional Museum.

‘The museum industry plays a vital part in our communities. These places, their staff and the literally thousands of supporting volunteers, are guardians of our national heritage, arts, treasures and taonga. They protect and tell our stories, they educate and interconnect our many cultures and they provide the continuity for strong traditions in our society. Museums also play a pivotal role in leisure and tourism sectors, and they demonstrate and profile New Zealand's innovation and leadership internationally. We want our awards to become part of a growing public appreciation and interaction with our museums and galleries,’ Ms Tocker said.

‘Our conference next week, called *Museum People – the Human Collection*, is all about people. It will focus on the staff and volunteers who keep our museums functioning and the challenges, training and development needs that we face. So it is fitting that we are introducing the awards at this year’s conference.

‘A lot of work has gone into making the awards a success. Museums Aotearoa is particularly grateful for contributions from the panel of selectors and to performance lighting company Selecon NZ Ltd, for its financial support to launch the awards programme.’

Museums Aotearoa ~ Te Tari o Nga Whare Taonga o te Motu is New Zealand's independent professional organisation for museums and those who work in or have an interest in museums. Members include museums, public art galleries, historical societies, science centres, people who work in these institutions, and people connected or associated with arts, culture and heritage in New Zealand. More information is at: www.museums-aotearoa.org.nz

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Further details

New Zealand museums and public galleries care for more than 10 million items relating to New Zealand's history and contribute to our national identity. Generating in excess of 1000 public exhibitions and publications and attracting over 5 million visits each year, museums and galleries are currently ranked as the top attraction for New Zealand's overseas visitors.

New Zealand museums are actively focused on enriching their communities by enhancing the quality of their facilities, collections, programmes, products and services.

There is unprecedented growth in the establishment and development of museum facilities and services in most regions of New Zealand. Over 3500 people are currently employed in New Zealand museums, and at least twice that number of volunteers. Total annual museum operating and capital expenditure is in excess of \$300 million.

Museums Aotearoa strives to be the strong, objective, fully representative voice for the evolving museum community, and to promote a shared sense of professionalism, solidarity and identity.

www.museums-aotearoa.org.nz