PRESS RELEASE

6 NOVEMBER 2026

Hamilton Airport named Supreme Winner at 2026 Waikato Business Awards

Hamilton Airport has been named Supreme Winner of the 2026 Waikato Business Awards, supported by Fosters, announced tonight at a gala dinner at Claudelands Arena.

Hamilton Airport and Waratah NZ were the standout performers in the category awards, each taking out two titles in a year when entries were up on 2025. Hamilton Airport won the Business Growth & Strategy Award and the Sustainability Award, while Tokoroa-based Waratah NZ won the International Trade Award and the People & Culture Award.

Hamilton Airport CEO Mark Morgan was named CEO of the Year. His leadership stood out in guiding the Airport through turbulent aviation times, in growing an impressive balance sheet alongside developing a strong management team.

Alongside the awards, three people were inducted into the Waikato Business Hall of Fame. They were Dallas Fisher, Sir Henry van der Heyden, and the late Jim Bolger. Their citations are available to view here.

Waikato Chamber of Commerce chief executive Don Good says tonight's winners reflect a business community that has kept backing itself through a demanding few years.

"Every one of these businesses has faced the same pressures as everyone else: higher costs, cautious customers and a tight labour market. What sets them apart is that they kept making the long-term calls anyway. They invested in their people, their markets and their communities when it would have been easier to hold back, and the results speak for themselves.

"The Hall of Fame is about recognising people whose influence reaches well beyond their own businesses, and this year's inductees embody that. These men have each left a lasting mark on the Waikato, through the enterprises they built, the industries they led and the communities they backed along the way. We're especially honoured to recognise Jim's contribution, and we're grateful to his family for sharing tonight with us."

South Waikato had a strong night. Waratah NZ took home both the International Trade and People and Culture awards, highlighting just how good the district's business community is.

Head judge Jason Trower says the panel faced some of its toughest decisions, with fine margins separating finalists in several categories.

“The standard this year was exceptionally high. What separated the winners was evidence. They could show us their strategy was working, not just that they had one, and that the results were showing up in their numbers, their teams and their customers.”

Dress for Success Hamilton won the For Purpose Award in a category that attracted a significant number of entries this year.

“Dress for Success Hamilton is a great example of what we saw right across the For Purpose category. It is run with the discipline of a commercial business, and you can see exactly how its resources translate into outcomes for the women it supports,” says Jason.

Between Two Beers was named Small Business of the Year, adding to the Small Business Marketing Award it won in September. The Small Business categories were introduced this year for businesses employing between 3 and 12 full-time equivalent staff with annual turnover between $250,000 and $1.5 million. Sign Logic and True Store won the Small Business Growth and Small Business Service Excellence awards respectively.

The full list of winners is below.

Media inquiries: Rebecca Aston | Rebecca.aston@waikatochamber.co.nz | 027 423 4277

ENDS

2026 Waikato Business Awards winners

Award	**Winner**
Supreme Winner	Hamilton Airport
CEO of the Year	Mark Morgan
People’s Choice Award	Waitomo Group
Small Business of the Year	Between Two Beers
Business Growth & Strategy Award	Hamilton Airport
Community Contribution Award	HMC
Emerging Leader of the Year Award	David Remmerswaal (Dimple Digital)
For Purpose Award	Dress for Success Hamilton
Innovation Award	Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari
International Trade Award	Waratah NZ
Marketing Award	Waitomo Group
People & Culture Award	Waratah NZ
Service Excellence Award	Montana Group
Sustainability Award	Hamilton Airport
Small Business Growth Award	Sign Logic
Small Business Marketing Award	Between Two Beers

Small Business Service Excellence Award	True Store