

KENSINGTON SWAN ETHICAL GOVERNANCE AWARD

Snowy Peak

SUSTAINABLE ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

Snowy Peak, Emerging Enterprise of the Year in 2004, takes top spot in this category this year for its exemplary ethical leadership. Since its establishment in 1981, sustainability has been a driving force for Snowy Peak. Environmental, social and cultural sustainability threads are woven throughout the company. Snowy Peak lives up to its vision of leading the way “in what is possible for our planet and its people” through fashion.

The company’s board takes a leading role in embedding ethics. The business plan addresses ethically based goals and initiatives to take the company forward in meeting its mission. The board is involved in the macro decisions: changes in sourcing practice of major raw materials with significant bottom line impact; moving to certified organic merino and cotton; or paying farmers a premium to encourage them to farm holistically.

The company’s practices encompass a full range of stakeholder concerns. Its products are environmentally and socially responsible and include clothing, homewares and skincare pioneered with the aim of minimising or eliminating harmful impacts upon the environment, now and in the future, while maximising development and renewal, in both people and the environment.

Its comprehensive community engagement programme has a strong focus on educating youth in ethical leadership. Staff career and development reviews include sustainability initiatives and each weekly staff newsletter has a new idea from staff on how to better use environmental resources. All teams select a sustainability project on which they can work each year.

Snowy Peak is demonstrating how the challenges of the future will best be answered through a new kind of business organisation, powered by holistic and ethical leadership.

JUDGES’ COMMENTS

FINALIST CITY CARE CREATING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

People under 25 years of age in New Zealand face great challenges getting into employment. Despite now making up 45 percent of the unemployed, they have gained only eight percent of the new jobs created since June 1998. City Care has demonstrated social leadership in helping to address this problem through a successful pre-apprenticeship work skills programme.

City Care is a nationwide contracting company specialising in the construction, maintenance and management of amenity and infrastructure assets. This industry sector is not generally regarded as attractive for school leavers. Notwithstanding the employment challenges faced by youth, City Care was faced with the challenge of a lack of younger trained staff to replace retiring skilled workers.

City Care’s training scheme offers unemployed youth and school leavers the opportunity to participate in paid employment through a series of rotational placements covering 20 different trades. Along with on-the-job learning, trainees receive life skills training from a support team of mentors and supervisors. At the end of the 10-month programme trainees are encouraged to apply for an apprenticeship. The retention rate of over 70 percent demonstrates the success of the programme. This initiative is part of City Care’s ethical governance programme that includes a clear focus on sustainability in its purpose, principles, practices and triple bottom line reporting.

FINALIST NEW ZEALAND ALUMINIUM SMELTERS ELIMINATING WASTE

Back in 2004 New Zealand Aluminium Smelters (NZAS) won the Top 200 Business Ethics Award for its commitment to a safe work environment with its “goal of zero” workplace safety programme. This year, NZAS has stepped up to the next level in business excellence and ethical governance with a lean manufacturing programme that aims to achieve a “goal of zero waste”.

Everyone in the organisation is being taught how to identify waste and eliminate it. This involves eliminating rework, scrap, repairs and time spent waiting or transporting material unnecessarily. Lean manufacturing is a team-based system built on the Japanese concept of kaizen – continuous improvement through small ideas to deliver sustained growth.

Enabling the corporate transformation are five key principles: challenge the status quo; go and see; continuous improvement; respect the operator, and teamwork. Fifteen information centres have been established which engage all staff in NZAS’ business direction, critical issues and companywide progress towards sustainable improvement.

The company’s coherent and inclusive strategic plan clearly explains how each person can make a positive contribution. NZAS demonstrates excellent alignment between its corporate purpose of “working together for a sustainable future” and providing its staff with the tools, engagement and coaching to achieve that purpose. The company provides a model for continuous improvement and cultural transformation to achieve sustainable growth.