

Designworks Enterprise IG Visionary Leader

Stephen Tindall

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP & VISION

Stephen Tindall has lived all his life where he was born – on Auckland's North Shore. But his vision for New Zealand has never been restricted by his residential view of the world. In the words of this year's panel of judges: "Stephen Tindall is the individual the commercial community turns to for thought leadership and vision."

Tindall was born in Takapuna in 1951. After 12 years with downtown Auckland retailer George Court, a store founded by his great-grandfather, Stephen Tindall jumped ship a year before a takeover and in 1982 started his own discount store, The Warehouse, with just \$40,000 capital funding.

The timing was almost perfect. Two years later a reforming Labour government swept into power and promptly swept out tariffs that restricted many imported goods. The Warehouse became a small chain and Tindall's driving philosophy that "everyone loves and deserves a bargain" became an increasingly catchy reality.

The Warehouse Group was floated on the stock exchange in 1994 with Stephen Tindall as managing director. It had 60 stores selling goods at prices so low they gave consumers access to an ever increasing range of items. Ten years later The Warehouse has 250 stores in New Zealand and Australia and sales exceed \$2 billion.

In 1995, Tindall and his wife Margaret established the Tindall Foundation as a philanthropic organisation to "assist communities to help themselves and heal problems rather than manage them". The Foundation is currently the largest independent private foundation in Australasia.

Stephen Tindall was deeply involved in establishing the New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development, is a major benefactor to education groups and charities, the main backer of Zero Waste New Zealand, an investor in technology start-ups and has been a member of government bodies such as the Prime Minister's Enterprise Council, the Science and Innovation Council and the Growth and Innovation Advisory Council.

From the beginning, Tindall was the architect of his company's culture and philosophy of putting people first and ensuring that all its stakeholders, team members, customers, shareholders, suppliers and the community, share in its success.

Stephen Tindall has successfully served three constituencies, said the judges. "His commercial approach to retailing has had an enormous impact. He made a vast range of goods from all over the world more accessible to consumers. That's a huge service and a classic business model. And he created a successful enterprise which, while it hasn't been flawless, is unquestionably



valuable to the investing community. He has created value for many shareholders by doing that."

He has practised what he preaches when it comes to business ethics, environmental responsibility and sustainable business management.

And he has made a genuine and sustained commitment to the community in general through the Tindall Foundation.

"Stephen Tindall is willing to stick his neck out for causes he believes in. His contribution stands out. He's left the business and come back in when it's problematic and when he's needed. He puts himself financially and morally on the line. He is dedicated to New Zealand, has committed his organisations to worthwhile causes and targets – such as the Warehouse goal of 'zero waste to landfill' by 2020 – and he is prepared to take a stand on things.

"The initial decision to float the company was made for the benefit of his employees and to secure their future. It's quite rare for a small New Zealand business to grow to be the size of The Warehouse. It is the sort of achievement that only a visionary leader can deliver." **M**