

CALL TO ACTION

Neal and Annette Plowman call on others to gift at least fifty per cent of their wealth

NEXT Founders Neal and Annette Plowman have momentarily stepped into the spotlight to accept the 2018 Kea World Class New Zealand Supreme Award – and they have used the opportunity to call on other wealthy New Zealanders to also give their money away, to make a difference.

Neal and Annette are the founders of the NEXT Foundation – a strategic philanthropic fund with a \$100 million capital base entirely funded by them – and they have instructed trustees to spend it all in ten years.

NEXT supports environmental and educational initiatives that are transformational and contributing to a legacy for New Zealand's two biggest assets – its land and its people.

Accepting the award and the attention it brings is out of character for the couple, who value their privacy and prefer results over recognition. However they want to use the opportunity to encourage others lucky enough to be in their position to think about giving back while they are still alive – so they can experience the satisfaction of generosity and see first-hand the positive impacts of their philanthropy.

“We fly under the radar – like many successful New Zealanders” Neal said in his acceptance speech.

“We don't like attention and prefer results to recognition.”

Annette Plowman added:

“Neal and I hope that by sharing our story with you and others, that it may encourage other people privileged to be in a similar situation to us to think about strategic philanthropy. There is a golden figure in philanthropy – to give away fifty per cent of your wealth while you are still alive – so you can experience the gift of impact. We intend to do at least that.”

Neal and Annette's acceptance speech in full:

NEAL: Kia ora, tēnā koutou katoa. Firstly, Annette and I would like to say thank you to the Kea management team, sponsors, and especially Sir Stephen Tindall for supporting the Kea World Class New Zealand Awards.

It is a wonderful event and both Annette and I are humbled and thrilled to be recipients of the 2018 Supreme Award. We are a team and we would both like to address you this evening – do not worry about this taking too long – we will be brief as you have all had a big evening.

Yes, we fly under the radar like many successful New Zealanders. We don't like attention and prefer results over recognition.

But we would like to acknowledge the wonderful mentors and advisers and the robust debates with directors, trustees and family about how we could contribute to the New Zealand community in a meaningful manner.

ANNETTE: This resulted in the formation of “NEXT” in 2014, a fixed term strategic philanthropic foundation with a \$100 million capital base.

Chris Liddell, a dear friend, business mentor and confidante, was the founding Chair and strong advocate of the plan and despite his enormous workload still has a powerful interest in the Foundation. It means a lot that both he and his wife Renee are here tonight from Washington.

The focus of NEXT is to invest in transformational educational and environmental projects that are scalable, large enough to have an impact, and that Neal and I are passionate about.

NEXT projects are very important to me.

Having been a teacher, education is my passion and great strides are being made in this through various initiatives.

Manaiakalani Outreach, The Mind Lab, Springboard Trust and Talking Matters for example.

Neal and I visited a low-income community Manaiakalani school at Point England recently. The project is addressing the inequality in our education system.



Annette and Neal Plowman at Pt England School.

The school principal Russell Burt and his wife Dorothy who leads the teaching practice were inspirational and students are achieving great results, against big odds. Their diverse and smiling faces were a beacon of light.

All of the children are being taught in a digitally based model, with devices funded by parents and guided by dedicated teachers.

One little boy said to me you look like Hilary Clinton. Should I be flattered or not?

The average learning age for these children starting school is 3 ½ years. The objective is to catch up that 1 ½ years ASAP – and it is happening.

Neal's passion is business and conservation. Wonderful progress is being made on initiatives like Project Janszoon in the Abel Tasman National Park, Rotoroa Island and the Taranaki Mouna project where predators are being removed, endangered birds are being reintroduced, and native forest is being restored. The team at Zero Invasive Predators are at the forefront of international environmental innovation, developing tools and techniques to eradicate predators from the mainland so New Zealand can achieve its goal of being predator free by 2050.

NEAL: The 15-20 projects invested in to date are a credit to the NEXT management team led by CEO Bill Kermode and his enthusiastic executives and inspirational leaders on each project. Bill and his team will be happy to provide details about NEXT and its projects and philosophy following this ceremony.

All NEXT projects are a business model for governance, reporting and general management.

What have we learnt:

1. There are some very smart young talented people who have world class skills in education and the environment that we can support with capital and management mentoring.
2. Provincial towns have been big supporters of projects and have given great buy-in to projects including capital and leadership input that benefits their local whānau and community.
3. There are capital funders ranging from high net worth individuals and trusts to foundations and government entities that are keen to support initiatives in which NEXT is involved e.g. Predator Free NZ.
4. NEXT is becoming a highly regarded brand assisting in adding real value to NZ.
5. Future growth by NEXT and its projects could be accelerated if additional capital is sourced from other high net worth NZ funders.

This has been a long evening. Thank you for attending and thank you for your support.

ANNETTE: Finally, Neal and I hope that by sharing our story with you and others, that it may encourage other people privileged to be in a similar situation to us to think about strategic philanthropy. There is a golden figure in philanthropy – to give away fifty per cent of your wealth while you are still alive – so you can experience the gift of impact. We intend to do at least that.

NEXT is supporting positive change for our two greatest assets – our land and our people.

It's what is important to us – to build a better New Zealand, for the country and people we love.

Thank you and good night.