Leading Light Business Excellence Awards

The stage is almost set for the fifth annual Leading Light Business Excellence Awards, which will be held at Shantytown this Friday night. This year 21 businesses from across the West Coast region have reached the final, and will be vying for the titles across seven different categories. The gala event will be emceed by television personality Ric Salter.

Ministers visit West Coast to celebrate official opening of EPIC

Science and Innovation Minister Steven Joyce and Communications Minister Amy Adams were in Westport recently for the official opening of the town’s new technology hub.

Enterprise Precinct Innovation Campus (EPIC) Westport is a branch of EPIC Christchurch, and is set up to provide a co-working space for innovative local companies. DWC assisted EPIC through funding provided via its Business and Industry Precinct Innovation Campus (EPIC) Westport is a branch of EPIC Christchurch, and is set up to provide a co-working space for innovative local companies. DWC assisted EPIC through funding provided via its Business and Industry Stimulus Fund on the basis that it aims to accommodate around 25 full-time workers and around a dozen hot-desk users.

WDC chief executive Chris Mackenzie says supporting innovative new developments like EPIC ensures the West Coast region is at the forefront of new working systems.

“We saw from the initial EPIC development in Christchurch that this is a very successful model for small businesses. Having co-working spaces ensures collaboration and knowledge-sharing is not just generated as a one-off – these are hubs where innovation breeds more innovation,” he says.

“For a region with the geographic challenges the West Coast has, finding new ways for small businesses to share ideas and support each other’s product development is key to our regional success.”

At the official opening Science and Innovation Minister Steven Joyce told the crowd that the EPIC facility would play an important part in connecting entrepreneurs with national and international businesses.

“This facility is proof that in the new interconnected world we live in, towns as small as Westport can host hi-tech businesses and marry opportunity with great lifestyle,” he said.

Regional Growth Study

The West Coast has been a popular place in recent weeks for Ministers of the Crown, with several visiting to open EPIC Westport, the Inchbonnie Hydro scheme and the release of a new detailed report into the region’s economy. The Tai Poutini West Coast Regional Growth Study particularly looks at identifying opportunities for investment, incomes and employment across our region.

This naturally piques DWC’s interest as it strives to support those exact activities. It is healthy for things to be looked at periodically and review if there are different ways that DWC can participate in initiatives as part of achieving its objects. Any additional research that can support how DWC goes about that is a great tool.

“We are all keenly aware of the challenges we as a region have been facing both directly and indirectly due to the drop in dairy prices. There has been some promising news on that front over the past two weeks, but we know we need to have more tricks up our sleeves other than relying on the success of just one industry.”

As was pointed out at the launch of the Growth Study by Hon Steven Joyce in his capacity as Economic Development Minister, this study is a unique opportunity for local community and business leaders to work alongside central government on an action plan for our region.

Collectively we will grow through new investment and new industries, and DWC is excited to see that central government commitment being made.

DWC will now take the time to assess how it can best feed into the Regional Growth Programme so that we can ensure our funding is applied in the right areas to best support our West Coast community.

As part of the programme, an economic action plan for the West Coast, informed by the Tai Poutini West Coast Regional Growth Study, will be released in early 2017 and we look forward to playing a role in that.

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