

Stuart Pescini

Award Citation



Stuart Pescini has had an outstanding career that turned a small single Levin office to a massively successful region wide, multi-franchise operation. That, along with his aspirations to help modernise and transform Levin's town centre, is the reason he is being recognised in this year's Horowhenua Business Hall of Fame Laureate honour.

Stuart Pescini comes from solid market gardening stock. His family operated market gardens in the late 1800's in Taita/Naenae before his grandfather Justin moved his gardens north to the Horowhenua in 1950. His father, Gordon, and three brothers continued the family business.

Helping out on the farm as a young boy, it seemed a natural decision to study a Horticulture Ag Diploma at Massey University.

After an early soiree with MAF, he then started his own shelter belt and consulting business.

In 1986, Stuart entered the real estate world discovering that brokering the purchase and sale of land could be just as rewarding as working on the land. He joined Harcourts in 1991 with the job of opening its Levin branch.

He started with a tiny office in the bottom end of Oxford Street with two employees. Stuart would admit that selling property in the Horowhenua in those days was tough going. The district wasn't exactly burgeoning. Properties moved slowly, manufacturing businesses were shutting down and the population stagnating. But with unwavering optimism, he rolled up his sleeves and got to work.

Much of Stuart's success came from going above and beyond for his clients. When a farmer was considering retiring and selling his land, he expressed concerns to Stuart about where his dog would live. Stuart and Robyn decided to adopt the dog.

The Harcourts Team Group franchise with Stuart in the leadership team has flourished. Today, after nearly thirty years, Stuart and his long-time partner Elliot Falconer have helped lift it to be Harcourts' second largest franchise in New Zealand. Its 12 offices spanning Palmerston North to the Cook Strait, today employs 200 agents and staff and this year reached the milestone of \$1bn of sales value.

Stuart's adeptness at managing and developing his agents can't be understated.

Over the course of numerous property bubbles and crashes he knows a thing or two about staying grounded. Stuart loves to tell his new recruit agents that after 35 years in the business he still makes his lunch every day.

Equally, he has long standing and very successful agents that have stayed with him.

One of significant contributions he's made to the district, is to help literally shape the landscape of Levin. On numerous occasions he has seized the opportunity, if he felt it could benefit the town. The South end of Oxford Street was one of the most run down parts of the town, and a real eye sore to visitors passing through Levin.

- When the opportunity came to re-locate the Horowhenua District Council building, Stuart approached each of the owners of the nine properties to pitch to them about releasing the land for the proposed site. He recalls sitting with George Yee around an open fire in his vege garden with the proposed plans to persuade him to sign off the deal.
- When Swazi were looking to extend an old building on Totara Street, he saw an opportunity to locate their headquarters on the main street and negotiated an agreement for this to happen.
- And when Countdown was looking to establish their new store, he identified the Silverdale site as an opportunity ... the rest is history.

Stuart has more than stamped his mark on the community.

He coached rugby and was manager of the Horowhenua Kapiti representative rugby team. He was a strong supporter of Life to the Max, that provides services to young people in our community by assisting them financially to expand their premises. And through the Harcourts Foundation assisted many causes in the region.

For all that you have done as one of the Horowhenua's most significant business leaders, and contributor to our district, we find you a worthy BKH Hall of Fame laureate recipient for 2020.